

AARON · SAIZ · AZACETA · HOLLINGSWORTH

PUNISHER

“

They come one by one.
The members of my jury.
To look me in the eye.
Before they decide my fate.

”



AFTER RETIRED MARINE FRANK CASTLE'S WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE KILLED BY STRAY GUNFIRE DURING A SHOOT-OUT IN CENTRAL PARK, HE BEGAN A ONE-MAN VIGILANTE WAR ON CRIME. ARMED WITH A VAST ARSENAL AND GRIM DETERMINATION, HE BECAME THE...

PUNISHER

THE CULT OF ASSASSINS KNOWN AS THE HAND MADE FRANK CASTLE AN OFFER HE COULDN'T REFUSE: BECOME THEIR HIGH SLAYER IN EXCHANGE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF HIS LONG-DEAD WIFE, MARIA. FRANK HAS SERVED AS THE HAND'S FIST OF THE BEAST, RESIDING IN THEIR FORTRESS IN JAPAN ALONG WITH MARIA, WHO HAS BEEN STRUGGLING TO REMEMBER HER PAST. FRANK HAS ALSO MANIFESTED SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES DUE TO HIS CONNECTION TO THE DEMONIC BEAST.

DR. STRANGE, CAPTAIN AMERICA, MOON KNIGHT, WOLVERINE AND BLACK WIDOW CONFRONTED FRANK OVER HIS RECENT ACTIONS, BUT HE WAS ABLE TO OVERPOWER THEM USING HIS NEW POWERS AND ESCAPE. VOWING THAT HIS WAR ON CRIME WAS FINALLY OVER, FRANK RETURNED TO THE HAND'S FORTRESS AND SOUGHT OUT MARIA.

MARIA, WHO WAS ON THE VERGE OF DIVORCING FRANK ON THE DAY SHE WAS KILLED, FINALLY DISCERNED THE TRUTH OF HER OWN TRAGIC PAST. WHEN FRANK RETURNED TO HER, MARIA SHOT HIM MULTIPLE TIMES WITH THE MYSTIC HANDGUN FRANK CRAFTED TO KILL ARES, ENRAGED BY ALL HE HAS DONE IN THE NAME OF THEIR FAMILY.

THE KING OF KILLERS

Epilogue

"PUNISHER NO MORE"

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LORD
PUNISHER!

LEAVE
HIM.

THE FIST OF THE BEAST
GAVE SPECIFIC ORDERS
THAT YOU WERE NOT TO
BE TRUSTED,
ARCHPRIESTESS.

YOU HAVE
THE EYES OF A
TRAINED NINJA. DOES
THIS LOOK LIKE THE
FIST OF THE BEAST
TO YOU?



AS WE SPEAK,
THE **SORCERER
SUPREME** AND HIS
ALLIES ARE BATTLING
THEIR WAY THROUGH THE
ENCHANTED WOODS THAT
GUARD THIS CITADEL.

YOU ARE
LIFE-BOUND SOLDIERS
OF THE HAND, MURDER
DISCIPLES OF THE HIGHEST
ORDER, ORDAINED IN THE
WAYS OF HALLOWED
SLAUGHTER.

GO NOW AND
DEFEND THESE SACRED
HALLS FROM THOSE WHO
WOULD **BEFOUL** THEM.



YES,
ARCHPRIESTESS.



I WISH I
COULD SAY I
WAS **SURPRISED** AT
YOUR FAILURE,
FRANK.

NGRRGH.



THOUGH PART OF ME DID HOLD OUT *HOPE* UNTIL THE VERY END THAT YOU'D DEFY MY DOUBTS AND PROVE YOURSELF THE BEAST'S TRUE MESSIAH.



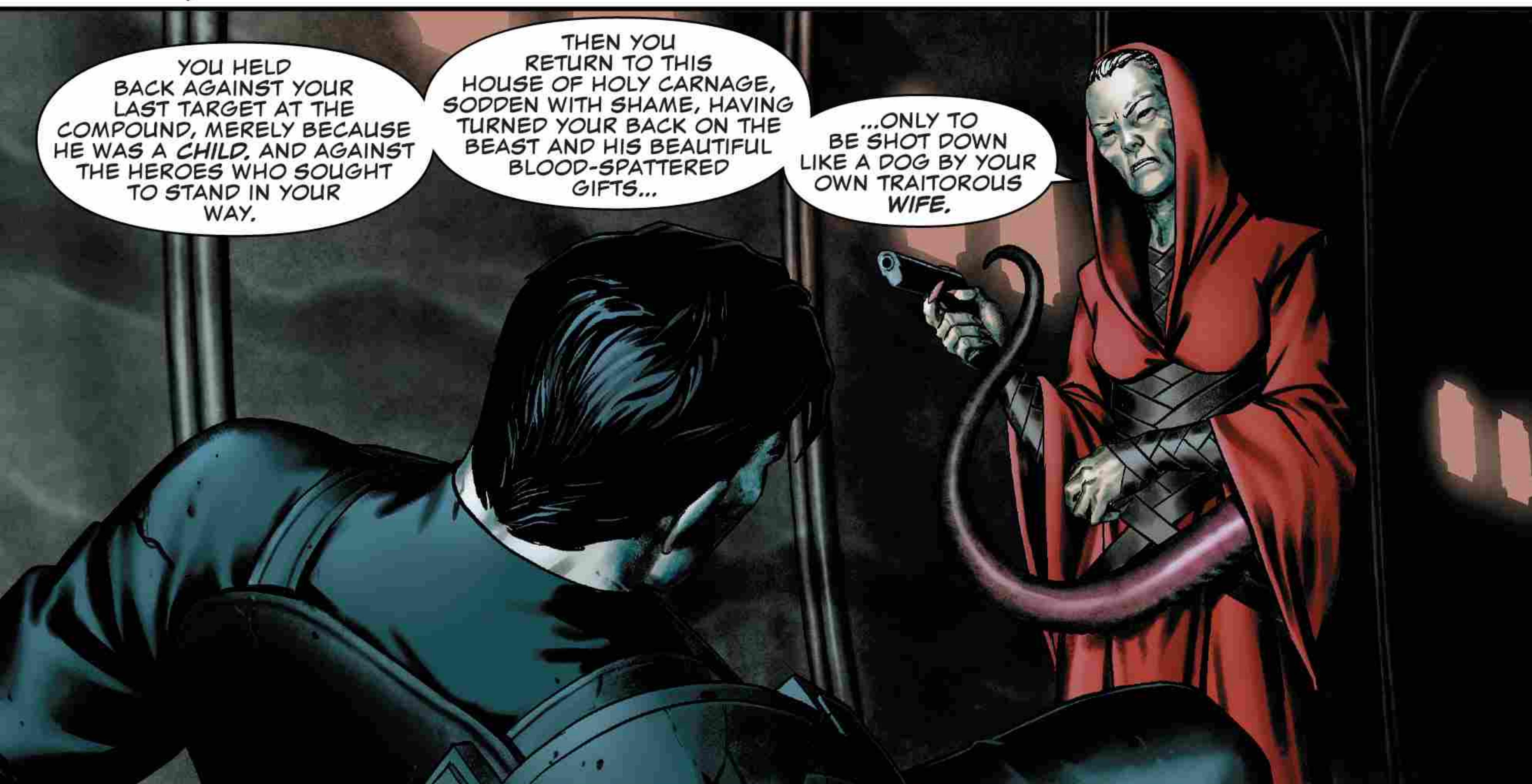
I SUPPOSE THAT *WISHFUL THINKING* HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY CARDINAL FLAW.

NNNGH.



YOU *FAILED* YOUR FINAL MISSION. YOU COMMITTED THE GREATEST OF BLASPHEMIES BEFORE YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR.

YOU *REFUSED* TO KILL.



YOU HELD BACK AGAINST YOUR LAST TARGET AT THE COMPOUND, MERELY BECAUSE HE WAS A *CHILD*. AND AGAINST THE HEROES WHO SOUGHT TO STAND IN YOUR WAY.

THEN YOU RETURN TO THIS HOUSE OF HOLY CARNAGE, SODDEN WITH SHAME, HAVING TURNED YOUR BACK ON THE BEAST AND HIS BEAUTIFUL BLOOD-SPATTERED GIFTS...

...ONLY TO BE SHOT DOWN LIKE A DOG BY YOUR OWN TRAITOROUS WIFE.



YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO USE THIS GUN ON ME IN THE END, DIDN'T YOU?

YOUR FINAL ACT OF WAR, BEFORE LAYING DOWN YOUR SWORD TO BECOME THE PEACEFUL, LOVING HUSBAND YOU'VE SOMEHOW *FOOLED* YOURSELF INTO BELIEVING YOU COULD EVER HOPE TO BE.

THAT'S HOW YOU'D REPAY ME FOR MY YEARS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION?



I WORKED FOR SO VERY LONG TO PAVE THE WAY FOR YOUR GORE-FILLED **TRANSCENDENCE**. TO PROVIDE EVERYTHING YOU WOULD EVER NEED TO REACH YOUR TRUE MURDEROUS POTENTIAL.

AT GREAT EFFORT AND PERSONAL SACRIFICE, I GAVE YOU... EVERYTHING, FRANK.

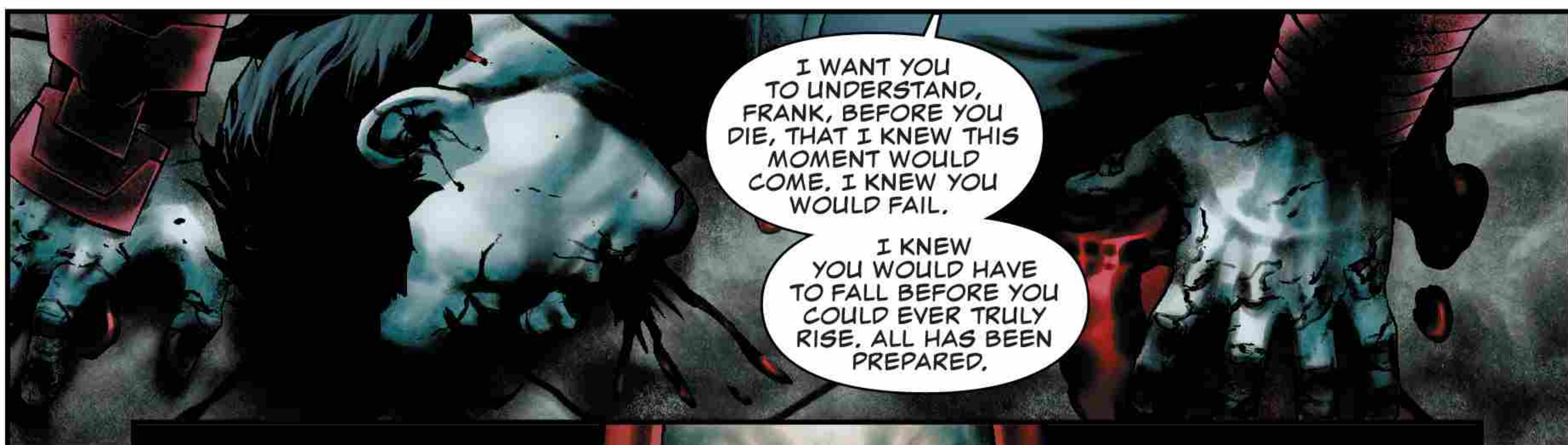


EVERYTHING!!!



AND WORST OF ALL...I **BELIEVED** IN YOU.

AND BEAST BE WITH ME...I STILL DO. EVEN NOW, WHEN YOU'RE LYING ON THE FLOOR, GUTSHOT, WITH ALL THE POWERS OF THE FIST OF THE BEAST BLEEDING OUT OF YOU.



I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND, FRANK, BEFORE YOU DIE, THAT I KNEW THIS MOMENT WOULD COME. I KNEW YOU WOULD FAIL.

I KNEW YOU WOULD HAVE TO FALL BEFORE YOU COULD EVER TRULY RISE. ALL HAS BEEN PREPARED.



WE'LL START AGAIN.

ONCE I'VE BROUGHT YOU BACK.



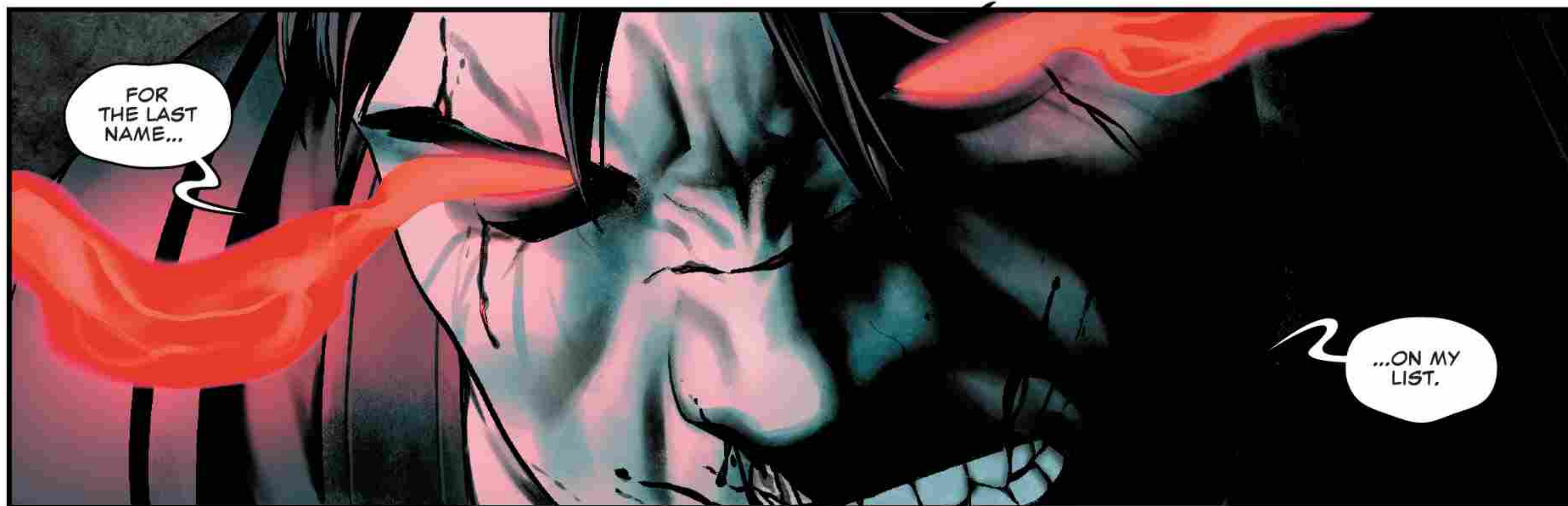
ONLY THIS
TIME, WE'LL
LEAVE MARIA IN
THE GROUND.

NOT...
ALL OF
IT.



WHAT WAS
THAT?

POWER.
STILL HAVE
ENOUGH.



FOR
THE LAST
NAME...

...ON MY
LIST.



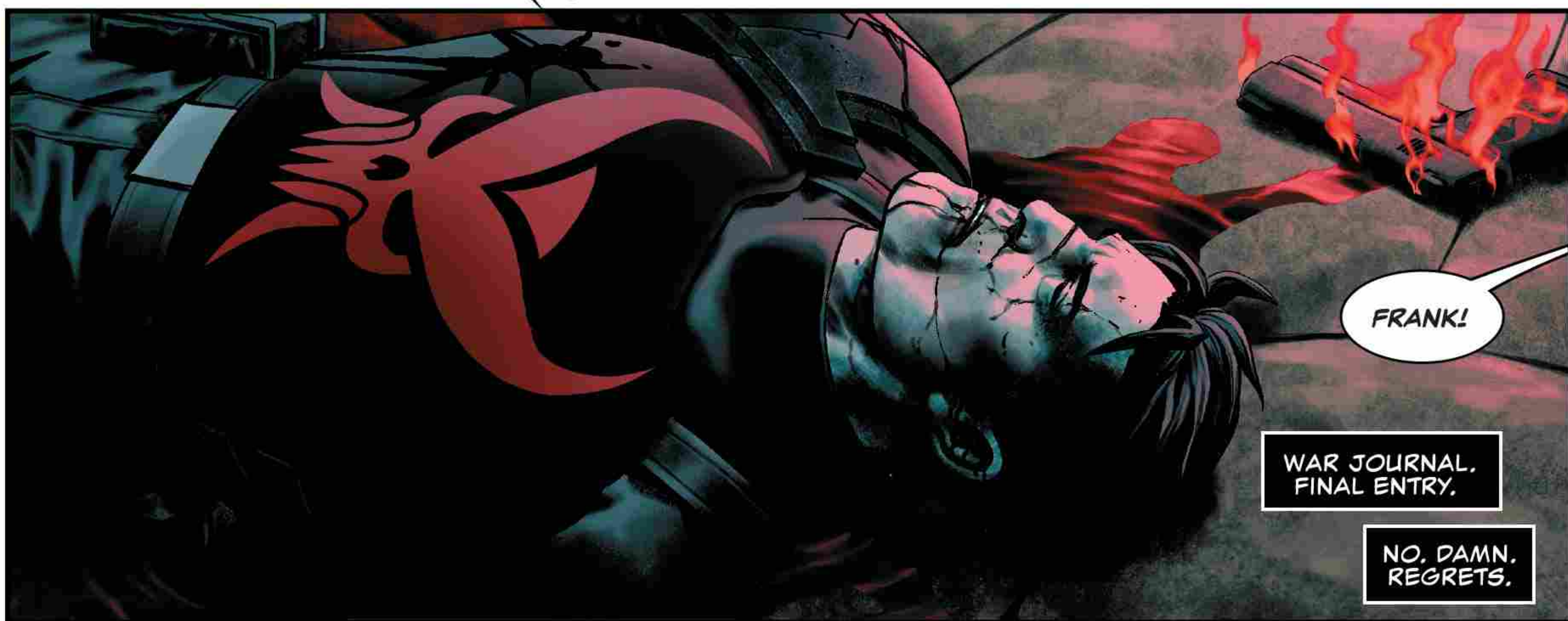
WHAT...?
NO...

NOOOO!!!



FRANK!

THERE'S
NOWHERE LEFT
TO RUN!



FRANK!

WAR JOURNAL.
FINAL ENTRY.

NO. DAMN.
REGRETS.

DON'T REGRET A SINGLE SHOT I EVER FIRED IN ANGER.



GOING ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE FIRST.

HEY, BUDDY. YOU LOST OR SOMETHING?

NOT ANYMORE.

WELL, YOU SURE LOOK LOST. LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HEADED TO A FUNERAL.

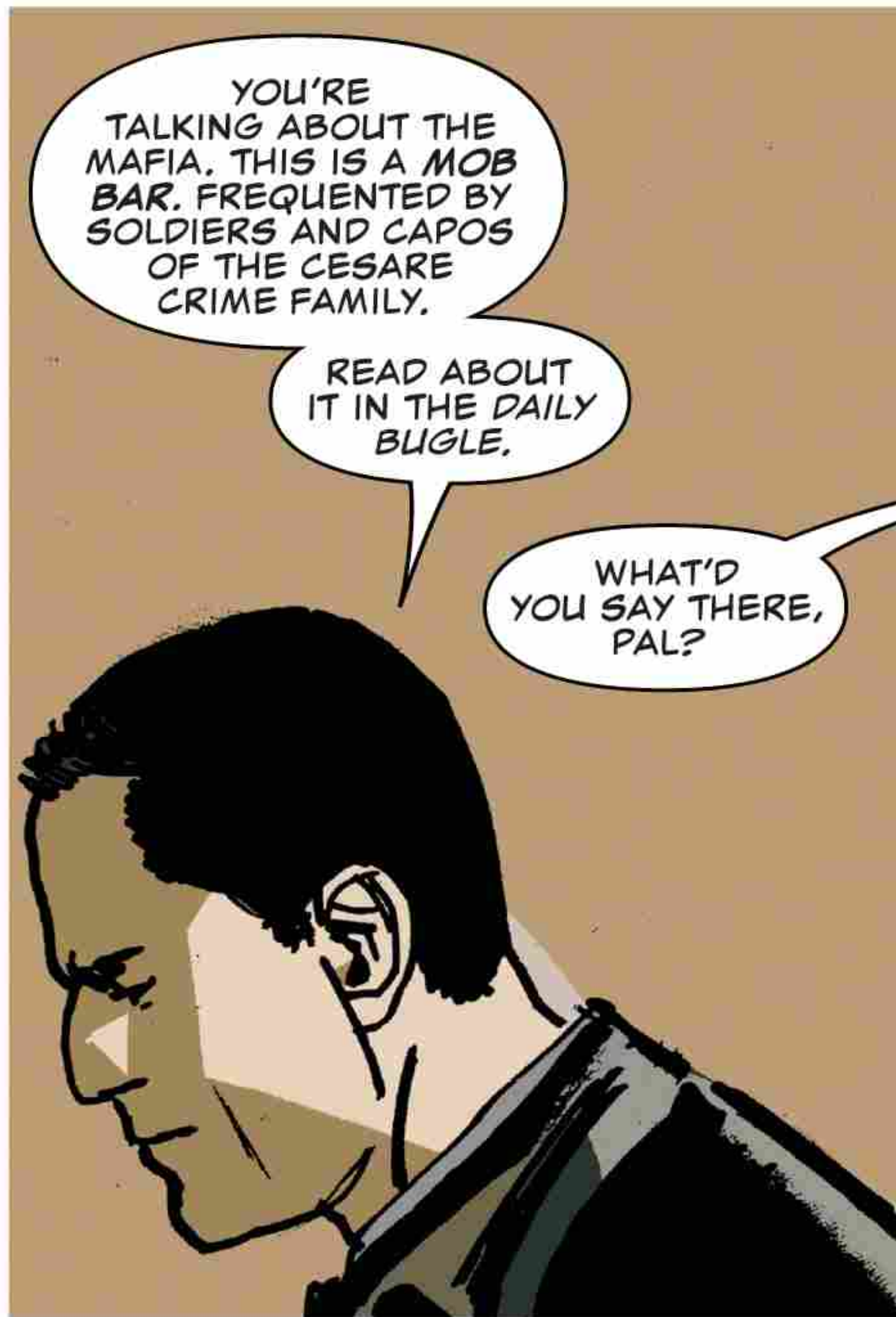
NO.

A high-contrast, black and white illustration. A man in a dark suit and white shirt stands in a cemetery, his head bowed. He holds a bouquet of flowers. In the foreground, there are several tombstones of varying shapes. A speech bubble in the upper right corner contains the text "JUST CAME FROM ONE." The style is graphic and somber.



WELL, YOU'LL BE HEADED TO ANOTHER ONE IF YOU DON'T FIND SOME OTHER PLACE TO DRINK. HOW'D YOU EVEN GET PAST THE DOORMAN?

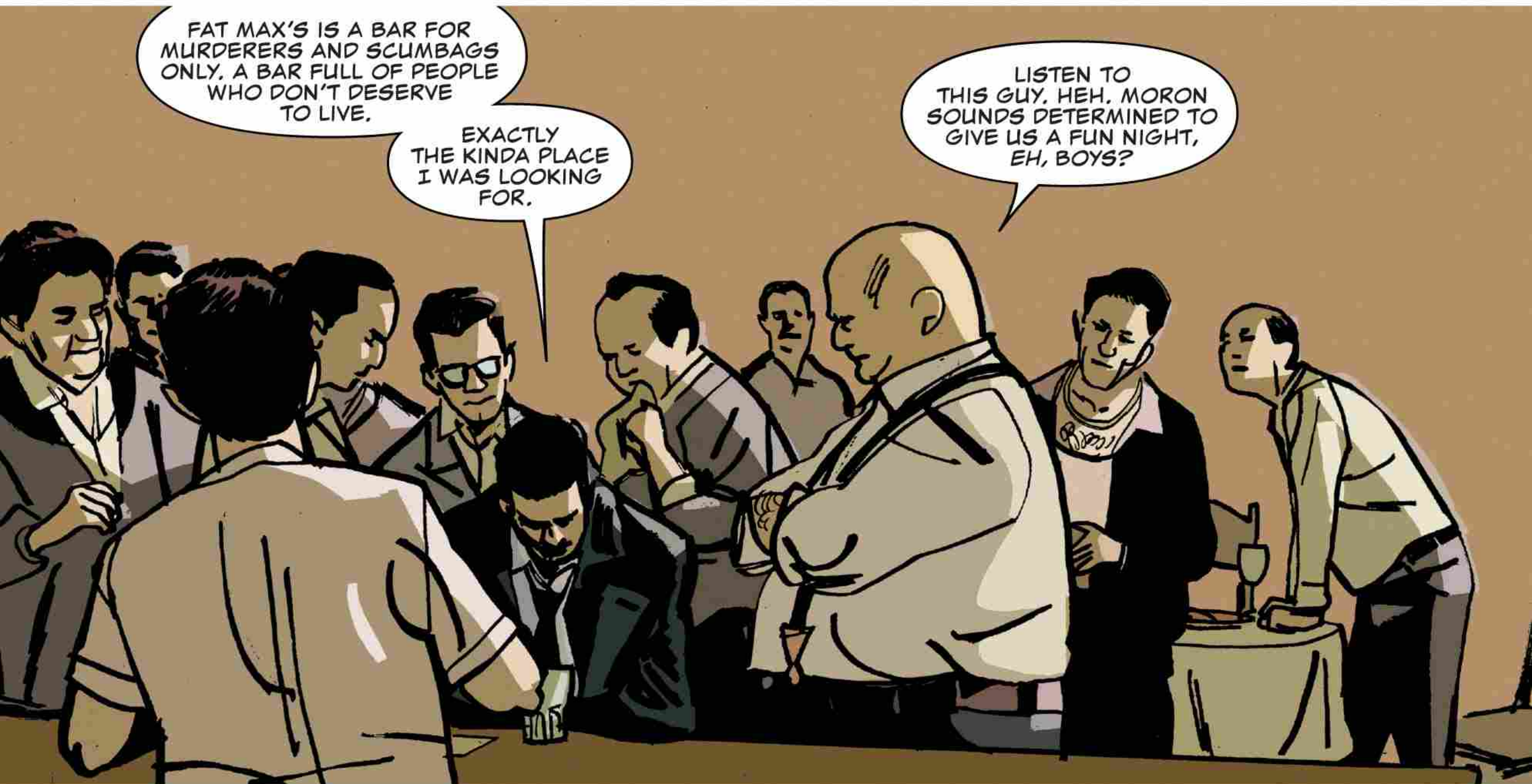
THURSDAY NIGHT AT FAT MAX'S IS FOR FAMILY ONLY. YOU GET ME? AND YOU SURE AREN'T NO RELATION.



YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE MAFIA. THIS IS A MOB BAR. FREQUENTED BY SOLDIERS AND CAPOS OF THE CESARE CRIME FAMILY.

READ ABOUT IT IN THE DAILY BUGLE.

WHAT'D YOU SAY THERE, PAL?



FAT MAX'S IS A BAR FOR MURDERERS AND SCUMBAGS ONLY. A BAR FULL OF PEOPLE WHO DON'T DESERVE TO LIVE.

EXACTLY THE KINDA PLACE I WAS LOOKING FOR.

LISTEN TO THIS GUY, HEH. MORON SOUNDS DETERMINED TO GIVE US A FUN NIGHT, EH, BOYS?



GET HIM IN THE TRUNK AND LET'S SHOW HIM SOME THINGS.

THEY WERE GOOD KILLS. CLEAN KILLS. DESERVED KILLS.



HEY, LOOK OUT, HE'S--

THEY'D EARNED WHAT I GAVE THEM. EARNED GOOD AND PLENTY WORSE IN MOST CASES.



JUST LIKE I'D
EARNED MY PLACE
AMONG THEM.

EARNED IT
IN BLOOD.

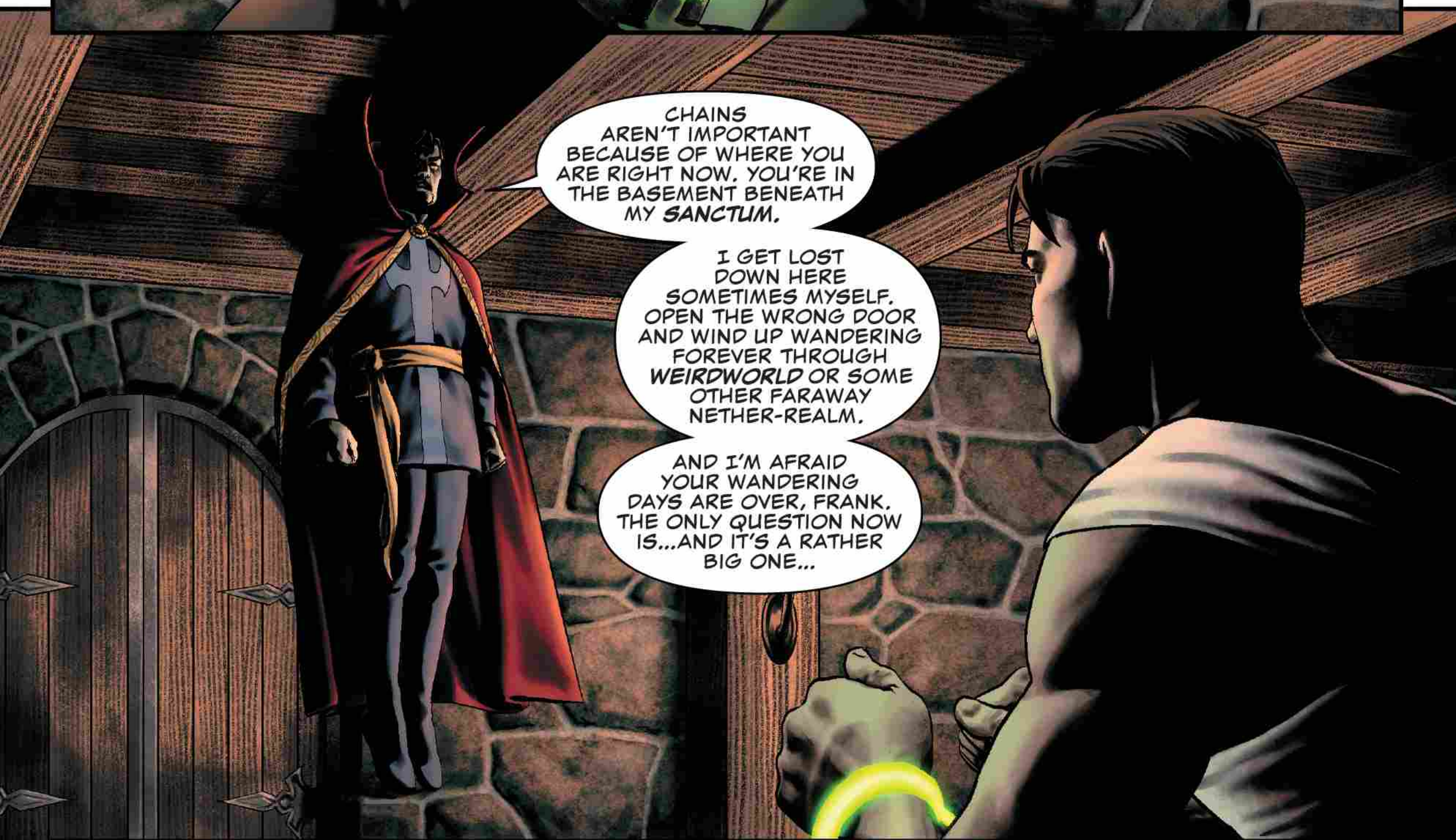


HHRRGGH?



STEVE INSISTED ON THE CHAINS. THOUGH I ASSURED HIM THEY'D BE UNNECESSARY EVEN IF THE POWERS OF THE BEAST HADN'T ALREADY LEFT YOU.

WHICH THEY HAVE.



CHAINS AREN'T IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW. YOU'RE IN THE BASEMENT BENEATH MY SANCTUM.

I GET LOST DOWN HERE SOMETIMES MYSELF. OPEN THE WRONG DOOR AND WIND UP WANDERING FOREVER THROUGH WEIRDWORLD OR SOME OTHER FARAWAY NETHER-REALM.

AND I'M AFRAID YOUR WANDERING DAYS ARE OVER, FRANK. THE ONLY QUESTION NOW IS...AND IT'S A RATHER BIG ONE...



...WHAT THE HELL ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WITH YOU?



THEY ALL HAVE THEIR OPINIONS, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE. SOME A BIT MORE... FINAL THAN OTHERS.

AS FOR ME, WELL, I SUPPOSE I'M STILL TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'D--

WHERE'S MARIA?



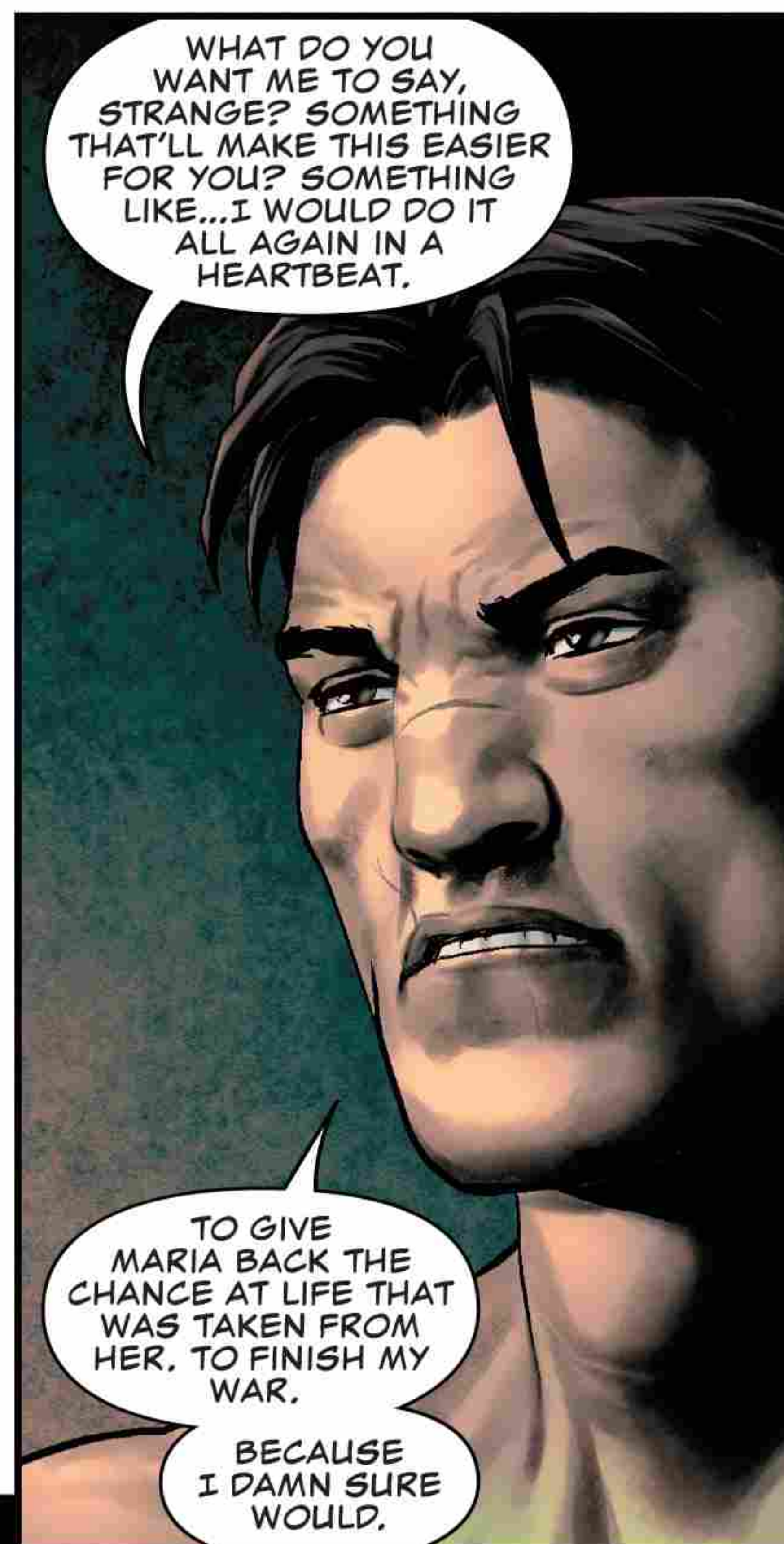
I'M NOT SURE SHE'D WANT ME TO ANSWER THAT.

THEN SHE'S ALIVE?

AGAINST ALL THE LAWS OF NATURE, YES, IT SEEMS SHE IS.

IF SHE LEAVES THE HAND'S COMPOUND, SHE'LL DIE.

WE'RE NOT HERE TO TALK ABOUT YOUR WIFE.



WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY, STRANGE? SOMETHING THAT'LL MAKE THIS EASIER FOR YOU? SOMETHING LIKE...I WOULD DO IT ALL AGAIN IN A HEARTBEAT.

TO GIVE MARIA BACK THE CHANCE AT LIFE THAT WAS TAKEN FROM HER. TO FINISH MY WAR.

BECAUSE I DAMN SURE WOULD.



OR ARE YOU EXPECTING ME TO *BEG* FOR MERCY? SAY I WAS BRAINWASHED? UNDER THE SPELL OF THE HAND'S ARCHPRIESTESS? DRIVEN MAD BY THE SIGHT OF MY RESURRECTED WIFE?

THAT THIS WHOLE BUSINESS WITH THE HAND WAS ONE BIG, HORRIBLE MISTAKE?



IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT, WELL, YOU CAN GO STRAIGHT TO HELL, DOC.

I'M NOT LYING SO PEOPLE LIKE YOU CAN SLEEP SOUNDLY.



I'D USE THE HAND AGAIN. I'D USE ANY DAMN WEAPON I COULD GET MY HANDS ON.

BECAUSE THERE'S A WAR THAT'S BEEN RAGING FOR YEARS, ONE YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS FLY RIGHT PAST MOST OF THE TIME.

AND I WILL USE WHATEVER I NEED TO GO OUT THERE AND FIGHT IT.

SO LOCK ME IN YOUR BASEMENT FOR ALL DAMN TIME IF YOU WANT. OR SEND IN LOGAN AND LET'S BE DONE WITH IT.



JUST PROMISE ME, STEPHEN...ON WHATEVER SHRED OF A SOUL YOU'VE GOT LEFT...

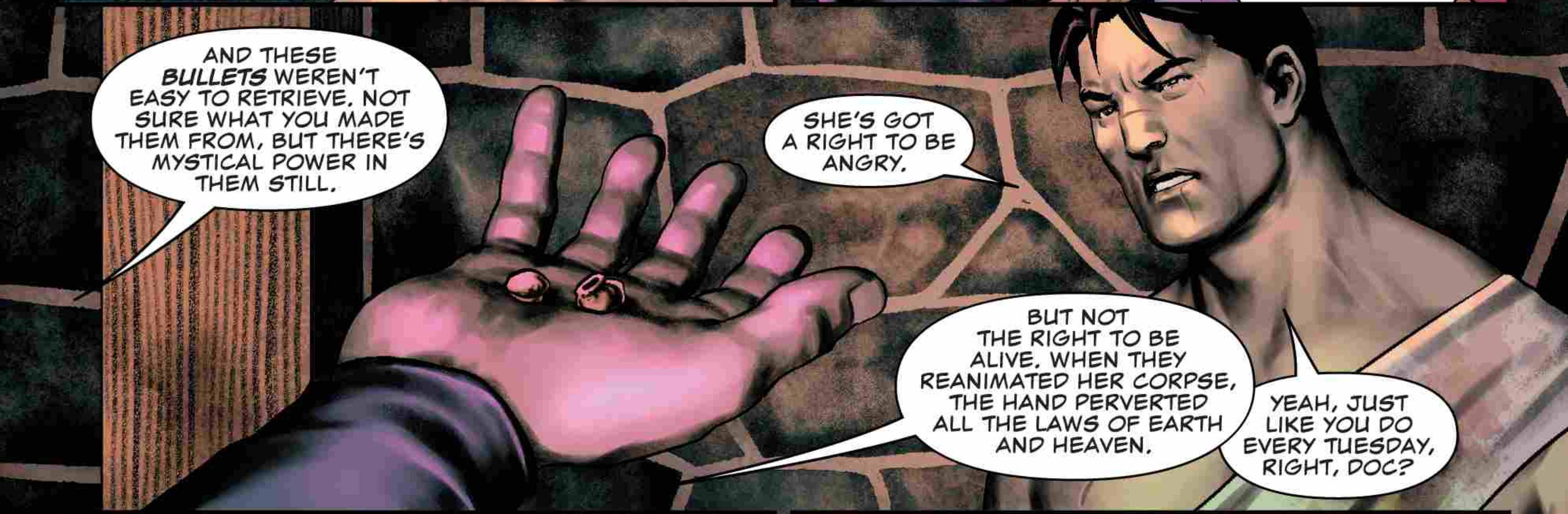
...THAT YOU'LL DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN FOR MARIA.



SHE ALMOST KILLED YOU.

TWO IN THE CHEST. IF WE HADN'T GOTTEN THERE WHILE YOU STILL RETAINED SOME OF YOUR BEAST-GIVEN FORTITUDE...

...YOU'D BE HAVING THIS CONVERSATION WITH MEPHISTO.



AND THESE **BULLETS** WEREN'T EASY TO RETRIEVE. NOT SURE WHAT YOU MADE THEM FROM, BUT THERE'S MYSTICAL POWER IN THEM STILL.

SHE'S GOT A RIGHT TO BE ANGRY.

BUT NOT THE RIGHT TO BE ALIVE. WHEN THEY REANIMATED HER CORPSE, THE HAND PERVERTED ALL THE LAWS OF EARTH AND HEAVEN.

YEAH, JUST LIKE YOU DO EVERY TUESDAY, RIGHT, DOC?



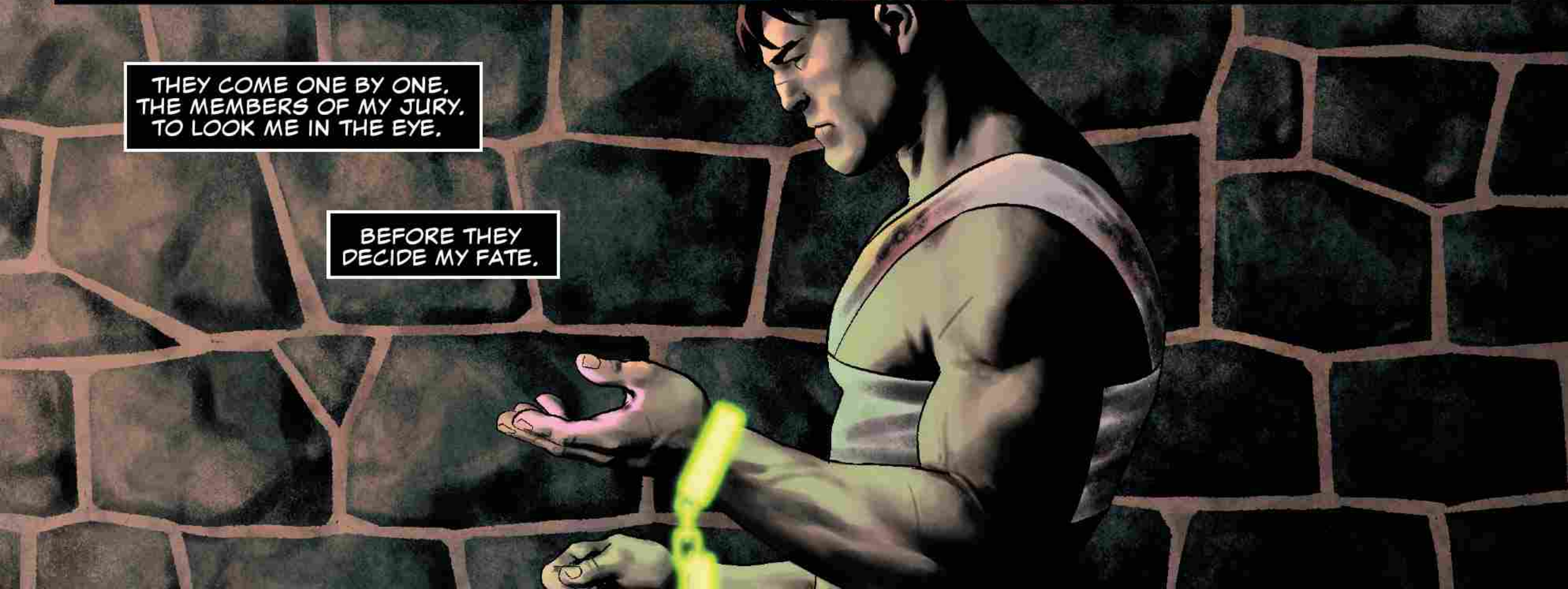
YES. AND BELIEVE ME, I PAY A LOFTY PRICE FOR IT. ME AND THOSE LAST FEW SHREDS OF MY SOUL.

BECAUSE A PRICE MUST ALWAYS BE PAID. AND IT'S TIME YOU GOT BUSY PAYING IT YOURSELF, PUNISHER.



LIKE I SAID, THE ONLY QUESTION IS HOW. HOW SHOULD AN UNRELENTING **MASS MURDERER** BE PUNISHED?

PERHAPS YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO'S USED TO DECIDING SUCH MATTERS.



THEY COME ONE BY ONE. THE MEMBERS OF MY JURY. TO LOOK ME IN THE EYE.

BEFORE THEY DECIDE MY FATE.

THEY KNOW THAT LOCKING ME IN A CELL HAS NEVER SEEMED TO HOLD.

SAY IT!

KILLING ME WOULD DO THE TRICK.

ADMIT YOU SCREWED UP! BIG TIME! GIVE ME A REASON NOT TO KILL YOU, FRANK!

YOU DO ME...BETTER DO YOURSELF NEXT.

BUB.

RAAAARRRGH!!!

BUT IF THEY HAD THOSE KINDA GUTS... THERE WOULDN'T BE SO MUCH NEED FOR A GUY LIKE ME.



BOY,
YOU REALLY
PISSSED OFF
WOLVERINE.

I THINK
IT'S BECAUSE
WE'VE ALL LOST
CONTROL LIKE YOU
DID, FRANK. GONE
DOWN A DARK ROAD
AND DONE THINGS
WE REGRET.

BUT WE
ALL DID THE
WORK TO
ULTIMATELY COME
BACK FROM
IT.



MAYBE YOU
CAN TOO. BUT
NOT WITHOUT
FRIENDS.

FRIENDS.
THAT WHAT
WE ARE,
NATASHA?



WE'VE TRUSTED
EACH OTHER WITH
OUR LIVES IN THE HEAT
OF BATTLE. WITH PEOPLE
LIKE US, THAT'S USUALLY
AS CLOSE TO HAVING
FRIENDS AS YOU'RE
LIKELY TO GET.

YOU PICK UP A
TWELVE-GAUGE TACTICAL
SHOTGUN, USE IT TO TURN
A MAN'S FACE INTO A STAIN
ON THE WALL, MAN WHO
WANTS TO SEE YOU DEAD,
THAT DON'T MAKE THE
SHOTGUN YOUR
BUDDY.



IT MAKES IT
A WEAPON. ONE
THAT HAS ITS USES.
SAME AS YOU
AND ME.

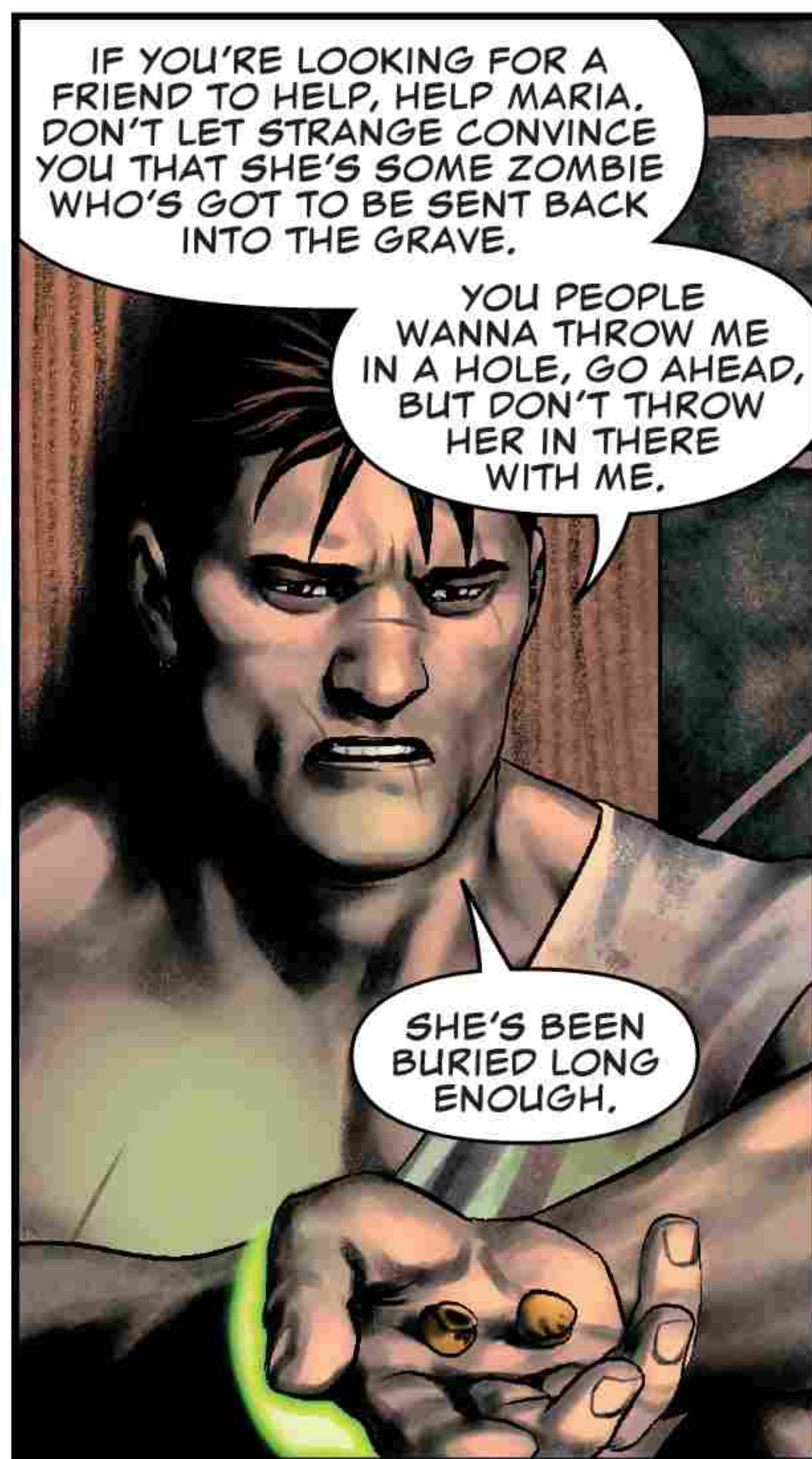
THAT'S OUR
RELATIONSHIP,
BLACK WIDOW.



FRANK.

YOU'VE
COMMITTED A
LOT OF VERY SERIOUS
CRIMES THESE LAST
FEW WEEKS.

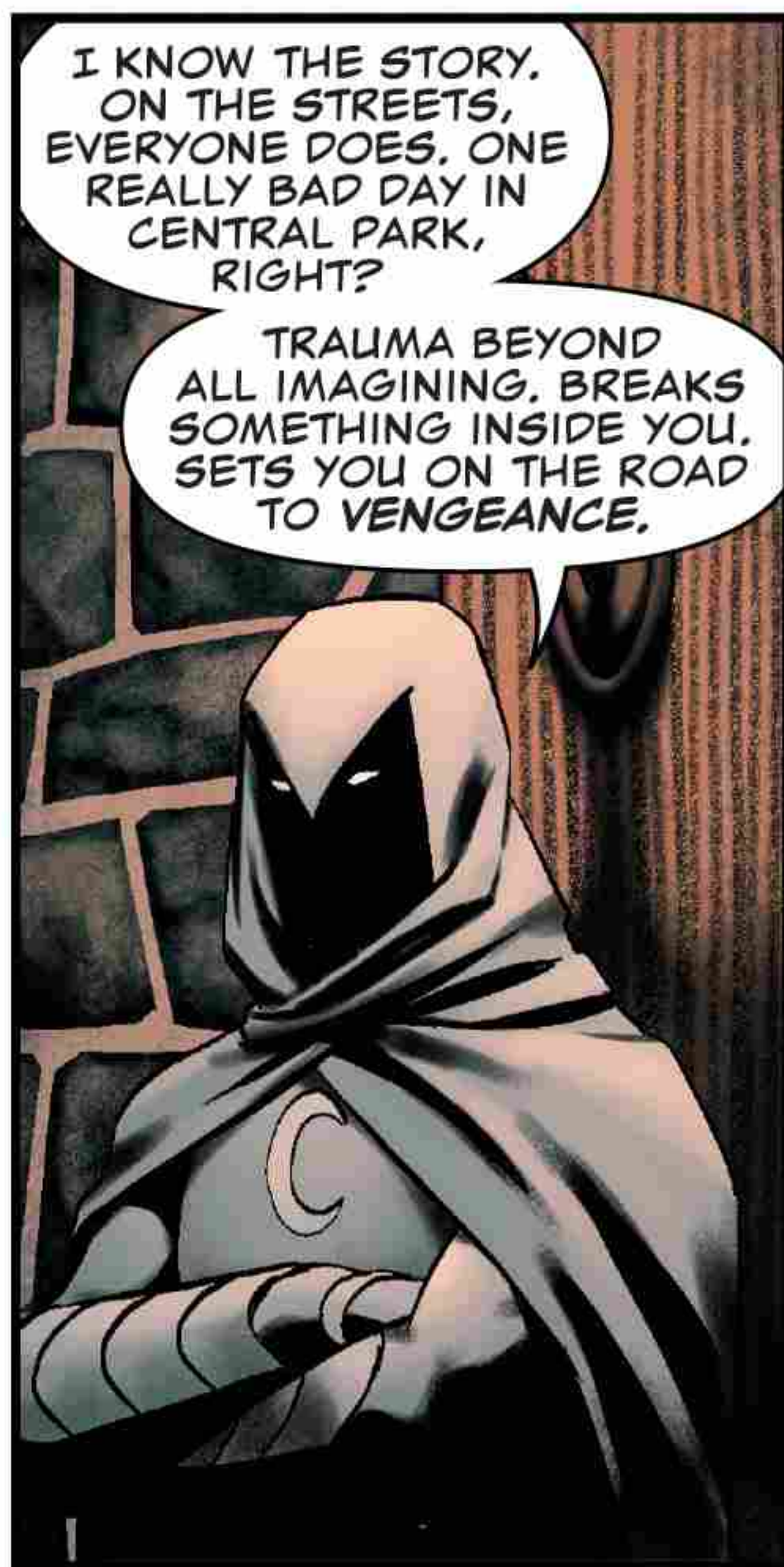
DON'T MAKE
ME ADD "BEING
AN ASS TO NATASHA"
TO THE LIST.



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A
FRIEND TO HELP, HELP MARIA.
DON'T LET STRANGE CONVINCE
YOU THAT SHE'S SOME ZOMBIE
WHO'S GOT TO BE SENT BACK
INTO THE GRAVE.

YOU PEOPLE
WANNA THROW ME
IN A HOLE, GO AHEAD,
BUT DON'T THROW
HER IN THERE
WITH ME.

SHE'S BEEN
BURIED LONG
ENOUGH.



I KNOW THE STORY. ON THE STREETS, EVERYONE DOES. ONE REALLY BAD DAY IN CENTRAL PARK, RIGHT?

TRAUMA BEYOND ALL IMAGINING. BREAKS SOMETHING INSIDE YOU. SETS YOU ON THE ROAD TO VENGEANCE.



A ROAD YOU TURN OUT TO BE...REALLY GOOD AT WALKING.

BUT EVEN SOMETHING AS HORRENDOUS AS THAT DAY IN THE PARK...DOESN'T REALLY EXPLAIN THE FULL EXTENT OF WHAT YOU'VE DONE, DOES IT? I MEAN YOU'RE OFFICIALLY THE LONGEST-RUNNING MASS KILLER IN HUMAN HISTORY.

THERE HAD TO HAVE BEEN SO MANY MOMENTS ALONG THE WAY WHEN MOST ANY OTHER MAN...WOULD'VE STOPPED. WOULD'VE CALLED IT ENOUGH.

BUT YOU NEVER DID. AND YOU NEVER EVER WOULD'VE, WOULD YOU? NOT ON YOUR OWN.



WAS IT SHELL SHOCK FROM THE WAR THAT WAS DRIVING YOU? OR...NO, IT WAS SOMETHING DEEPER, WASN'T IT? YEAH. OKAY, I SEE NOW.

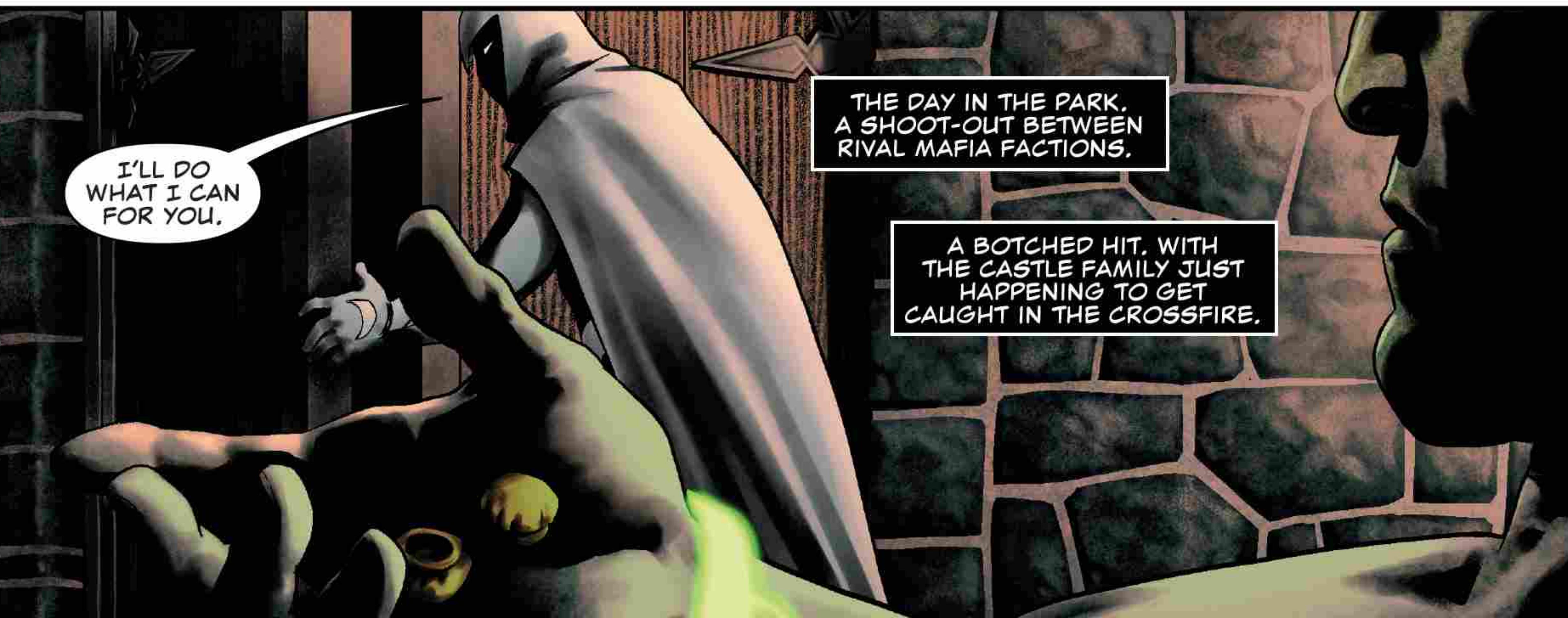
SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG. SOMETHING THAT CONVINCED YOU AT AN EARLY AGE... THAT THIS IS WHO YOU ARE. YOU'RE THE PUNISHER.



MAYBE I'M CRAZY, BUT I BELIEVE THE WOUNDS OF TRAUMA CAN BE HEALED AND EVEN THE DARKEST OF MINDS CAN FIND THE LIGHT.

I BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF REDEMPTION, FRANK CASTLE. EVEN FOR YOU.

THANK YOU FOR THIS TALK.



I'LL DO WHAT I CAN FOR YOU.

THE DAY IN THE PARK. A SHOOT-OUT BETWEEN RIVAL MAFIA FACTIONS.

A BOTCHED HIT. WITH THE CASTLE FAMILY JUST HAPPENING TO GET CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE.



AFTER THE FUNERAL, I TRACKED DOWN EVERY SHOOTER. THEIR DRIVERS, THEIR BOSSES WHO GAVE THE ORDER, THEIR CROOKED LAWYERS WHO'D KEPT THEM OUT OF PRISON.

OPEN DOOR THREE!



DEAD MAN WALKING!

EVERYONE EVEN REMOTELY CONNECTED TO THAT DAY IN THE PARK...HAD THEIR MOMENT WITH ME.



HOPE YOU MADE YOUR PEACE WITH GOD, GAZZERA.

GOD CAN KISS MY GUIDO ASS.

SOME DIED QUICK. SOME I LET BEG. SOME I MADE SUFFER.



UNTIL THERE WAS ONLY ONE TARGET LEFT.

WHAT THE HELL? WE GOT SMOKE IN THE HALLWAY!

BIG BUMPY GAZZERA, TWO-BIT MUSCLE FOR THE COSTA FAMILY, TERRIBLE SHOT. EVERY SHOT HE FIRED THAT DAY ON THE MEADOW WENT INTO THE DIRT OR THE TREES.

EXCEPT FOR THE ONE THAT HIT MY DAUGHTER IN HER ABDOMEN.

SHOTS FIRED!
SHOTS FIRED ON
CELLBLOCK
NINE!

HE'S FIRING
GAS CANISTERS...
COUGH COUGH...
KNOCKOUT GAS...
GET THE
MASKS...

HOLY
GOD. IT'S A
BREAKOUT.



WITH HIS USUAL LAWYER OFF THE TABLE, GAZZERA ENDED UP GETTING CONVICTED FOR FIREBOMBING A CROWDED DELI. GOT THE DEATH PENALTY. LETHAL INJECTION.

ONE MAN.
IT'S NOT A
BREAKOUT. HE'S...
HAKK! HE'S
BREAKING IN!
HE...

HELLO?
COMMAND,
COME IN?



I COULD'VE SAT OUTSIDE THE PRISON AND DRANK A BEER WHILE THEY STRAPPED HIM DOWN.

BOOM



WHILE HIS LUNGS FILLED WITH FLUID, HIS AIRWAY CHOKED WITH FROTH.

WHILE HE DROWNED IN HIS OWN BILE, TOO DRUGGED TO EVEN SQUIRM.

THOOMP



GAZZERA.

HUH?
COUGH
WHAT'S...?



I COULD'VE DONE NOTHING, AND HE STILL WOULD'VE DIED.

BUT "DOING
NOTHING" ISN'T HOW
YOU FIGHT A WAR.

YOU DO IT BY HAVING
THE STRENGTH TO
PULL THE TRIGGER.

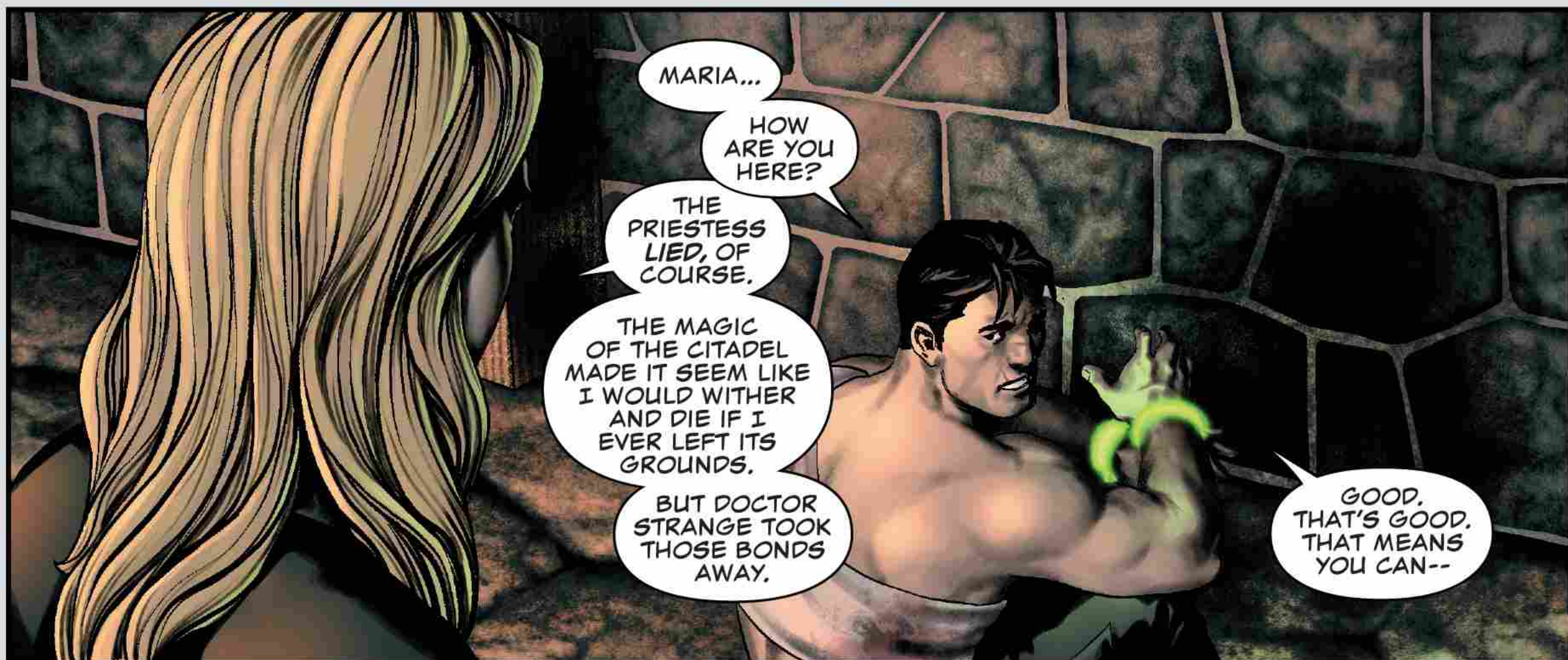
BLAM



I'D LEARNED THAT
LESSON WHEN I
WAS 10 YEARS OLD.







MARIA...

HOW
ARE YOU
HERE?

THE
PRIESTESS
LIED, OF
COURSE.

THE MAGIC
OF THE CITADEL
MADE IT SEEM LIKE
I WOULD WITHER
AND DIE IF I
EVER LEFT ITS
GROUNDS.

BUT DOCTOR
STRANGE TOOK
THOSE BONDS
AWAY.

GOOD.
THAT'S GOOD.
THAT MEANS
YOU CAN--



THAT MEANS
I CAN FINALLY FINISH
WHAT I WAS TRYING TO
TELL YOU THAT DAY
IN THE PARK.

WE'RE **DONE**,
FRANK. I WANT
A DIVORCE.

AND SINCE
TECHNICALLY I'M
STILL DEAD....I'VE
ALREADY GOT
IT.

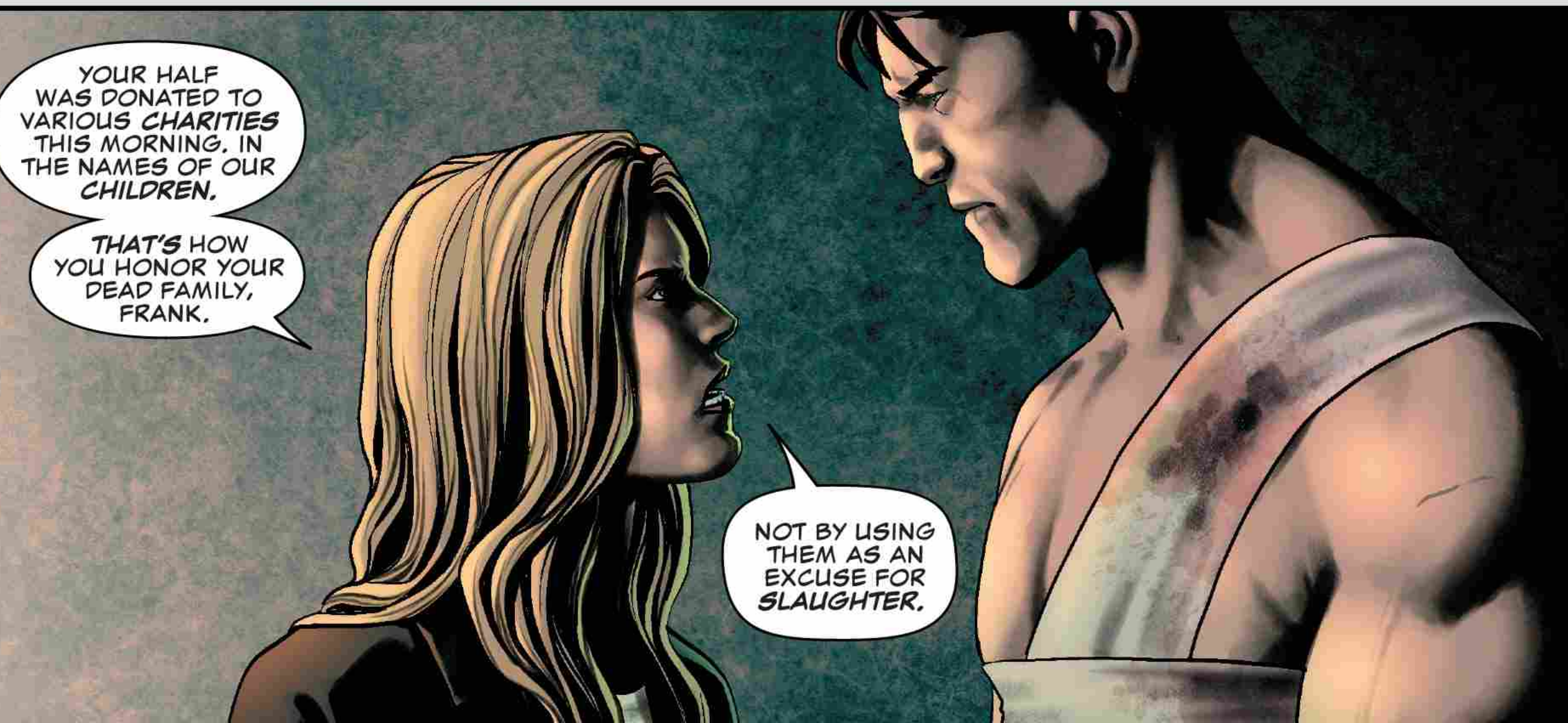


WITH SOME
HELP FROM NATASHA,
I'VE TAKEN THE
LIBERTY OF DIVIDING
YOUR ASSETS.

I'VE
SOLD YOUR
SAFE HOUSES
AND ALL THEIR
CONTENTS.

THE **REAL
ESTATE** ALONE
FETCHED QUITE
THE PRICE.

I HAVE MY
HALF IN **CASH**, IN
SEVERAL DUFFLE
BAGS. SITTING IN
MY NEW CAR.



YOUR HALF
WAS DONATED TO
VARIOUS **CHARITIES**
THIS MORNING. IN
THE NAMES OF OUR
CHILDREN.

THAT'S HOW
YOU HONOR YOUR
DEAD FAMILY,
FRANK.

NOT BY USING
THEM AS AN
EXCUSE FOR
SLAUGHTER.



MARIA...

NO, YOU HAD YOUR TIME TO SPEAK WHILE I WAS DEAD. AND YOU SAID **PLENTY**. NOW IT'S MY TIME.



ALL THESE YEARS, YOU LET YOURSELF BELIEVE THE LIE THAT YOU LOST YOUR FAMILY TO BULLETS.

THAT THEY WERE **TAKEN** FROM YOU, BY A WORLD RUN AMOK.



BUT I'M HERE TO REMIND YOU OF THE TRUTH. YOU'D **ALREADY** LOST THEM BEFORE THOSE SHOTS WERE EVER FIRED.

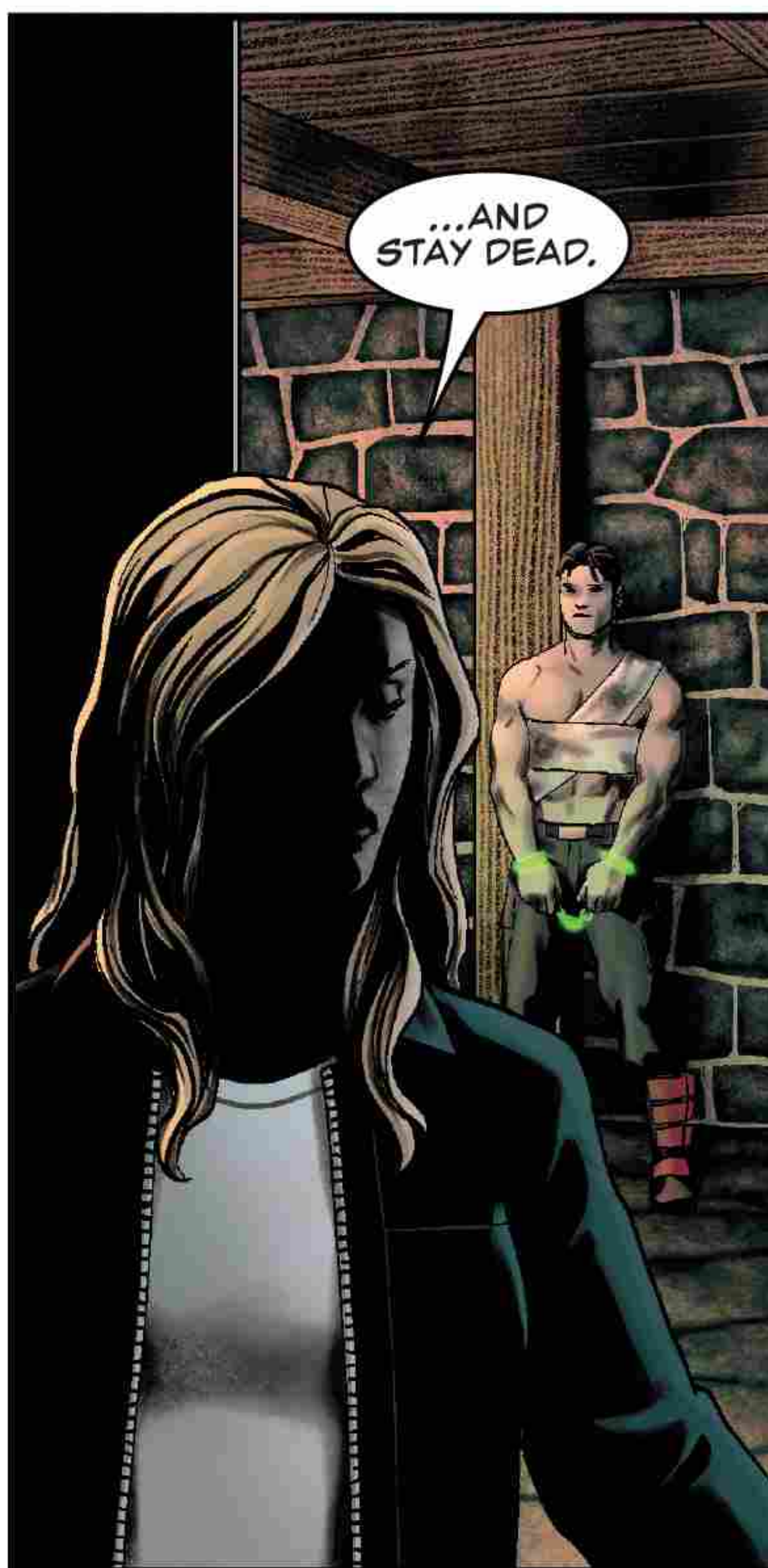
YOU LOST THEM ALL ON YOUR OWN.



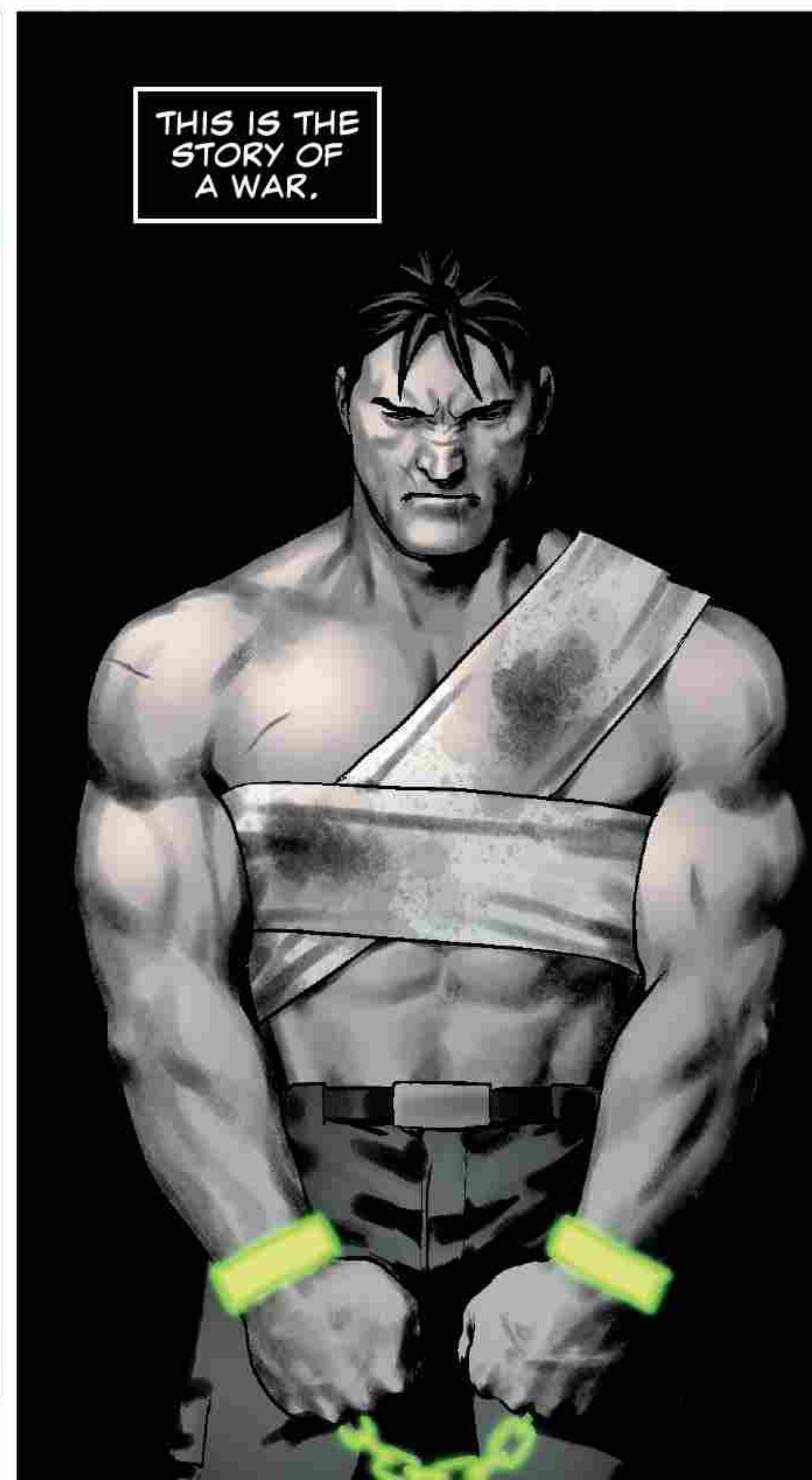
GOODBYE, FRANK. ONE OF US HAS A LIFE TO LIVE NOW. ONE THAT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING.



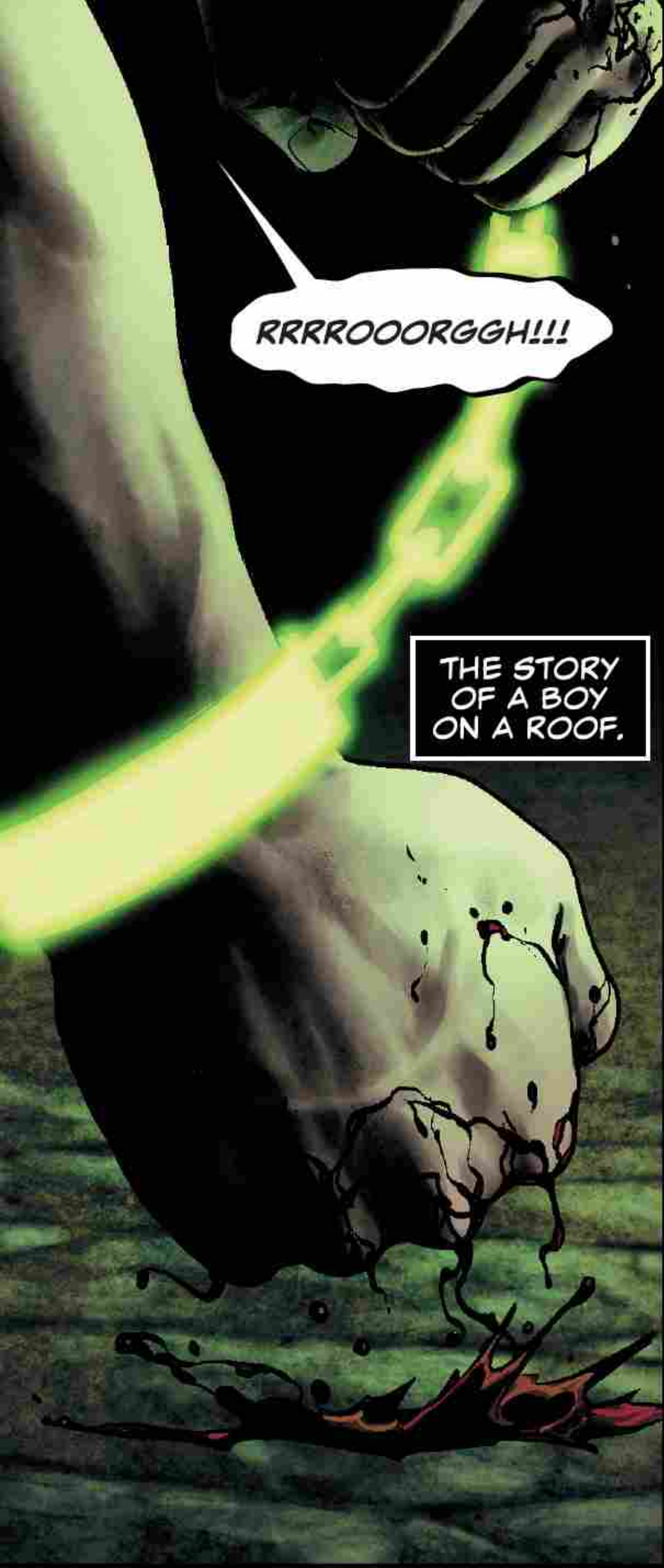
AS FOR YOU...WHEN YOU DISAPPEAR DOWN WHATEVER ABYSS THEY'RE ABOUT TO HURL YOU INTO... DO US ALL A FAVOR...



...AND STAY DEAD.

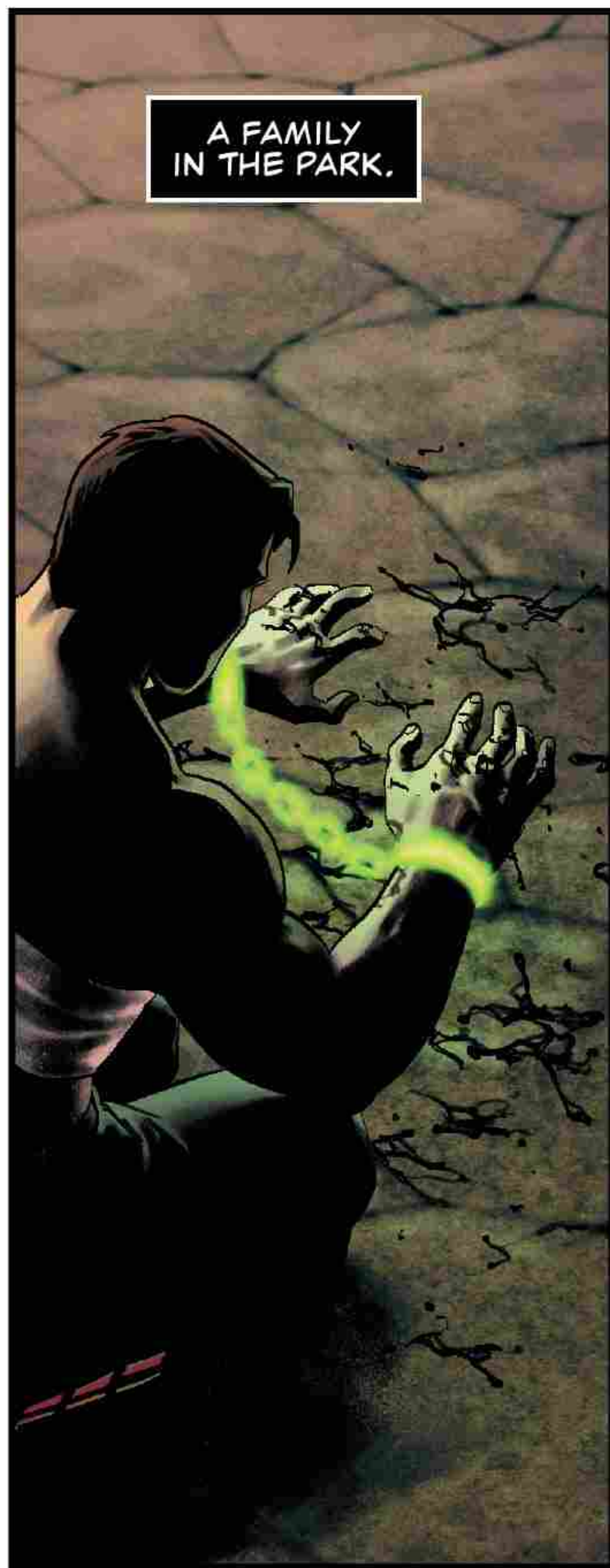


THIS IS THE STORY OF A WAR.



RRRROOORGHH!!!

THE STORY
OF A BOY
ON A ROOF.



A FAMILY
IN THE PARK.



A FIST OF
THE BEAST.

HHRRRRRRRGHH!



THE STORY OF A
PUNISHER WHO
HAS NO REGRETS...



...AND A
HUSBAND...
A FATHER...
A MAN...

...WHO HAS
MORE THAN HE
COULD EVER
HOPE TO BEAR.



THIS IS THE
STORY OF A
WAR. MY WAR.

AND HOW
IT ENDED.

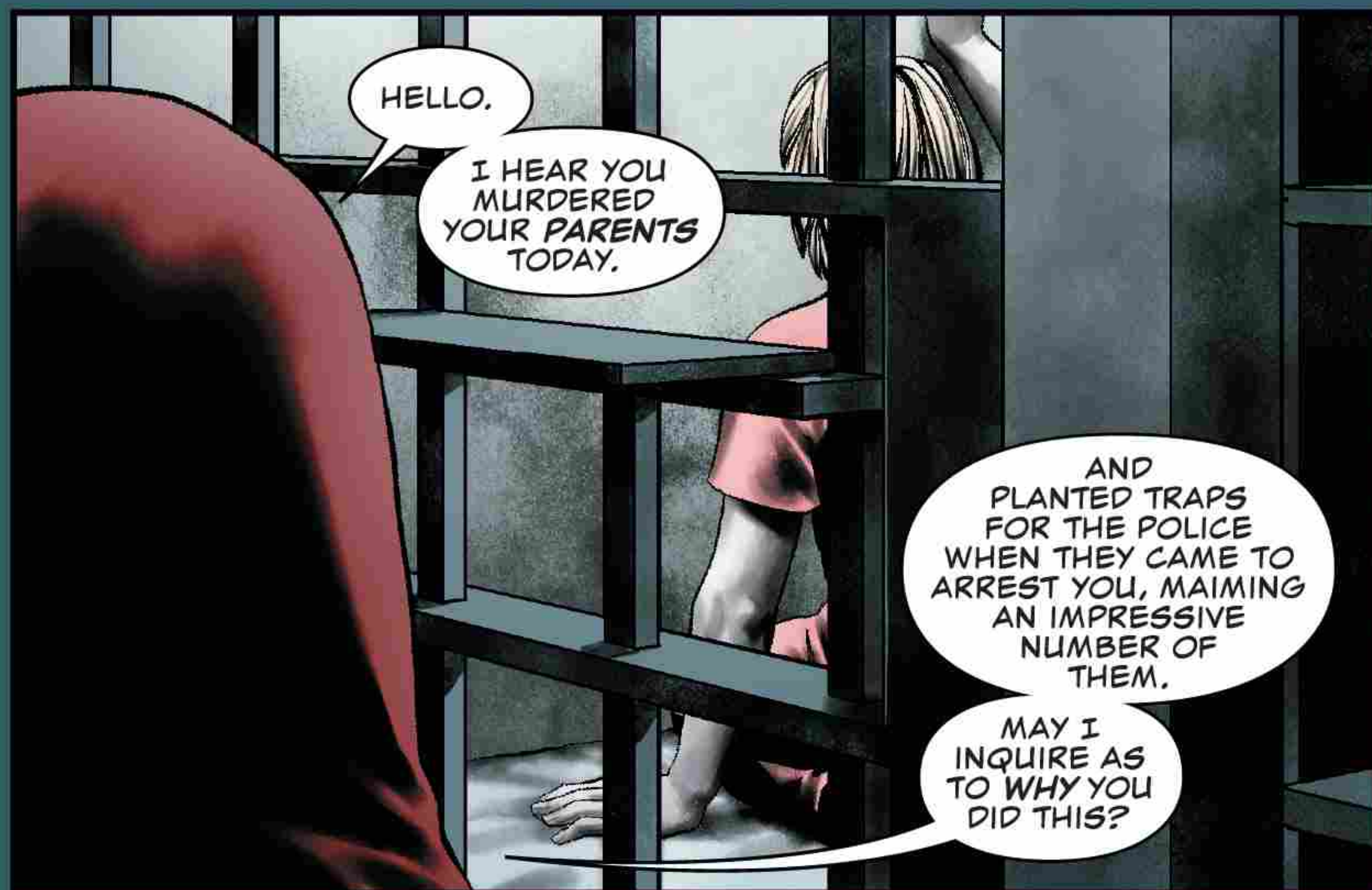
IN THE
NAME OF THE
BEAST...

...HEAR MY
PRAYER...

...YOU
SON OF A
BITCH,







HELLO.

I HEAR YOU MURDERED YOUR PARENTS TODAY.

AND PLANTED TRAPS FOR THE POLICE WHEN THEY CAME TO ARREST YOU, MAIMING AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF THEM.

MAY I INQUIRE AS TO WHY YOU DID THIS?



I DON'T REALLY KNOW. IT WAS ALMOST LIKE...

...IT WAS WHAT I WAS BORN TO DO.



I SEE. HOW VERY SPLENDID.

PERHAPS YOU WOULDN'T MIND ANSWERING ONE MORE QUESTION FOR ME?



DOES ONE OF THESE BELONG TO YOU?

"WE OF THE HAND ARE NOT HERE AS ASSASSINS BUT AS *SAVIORS*."

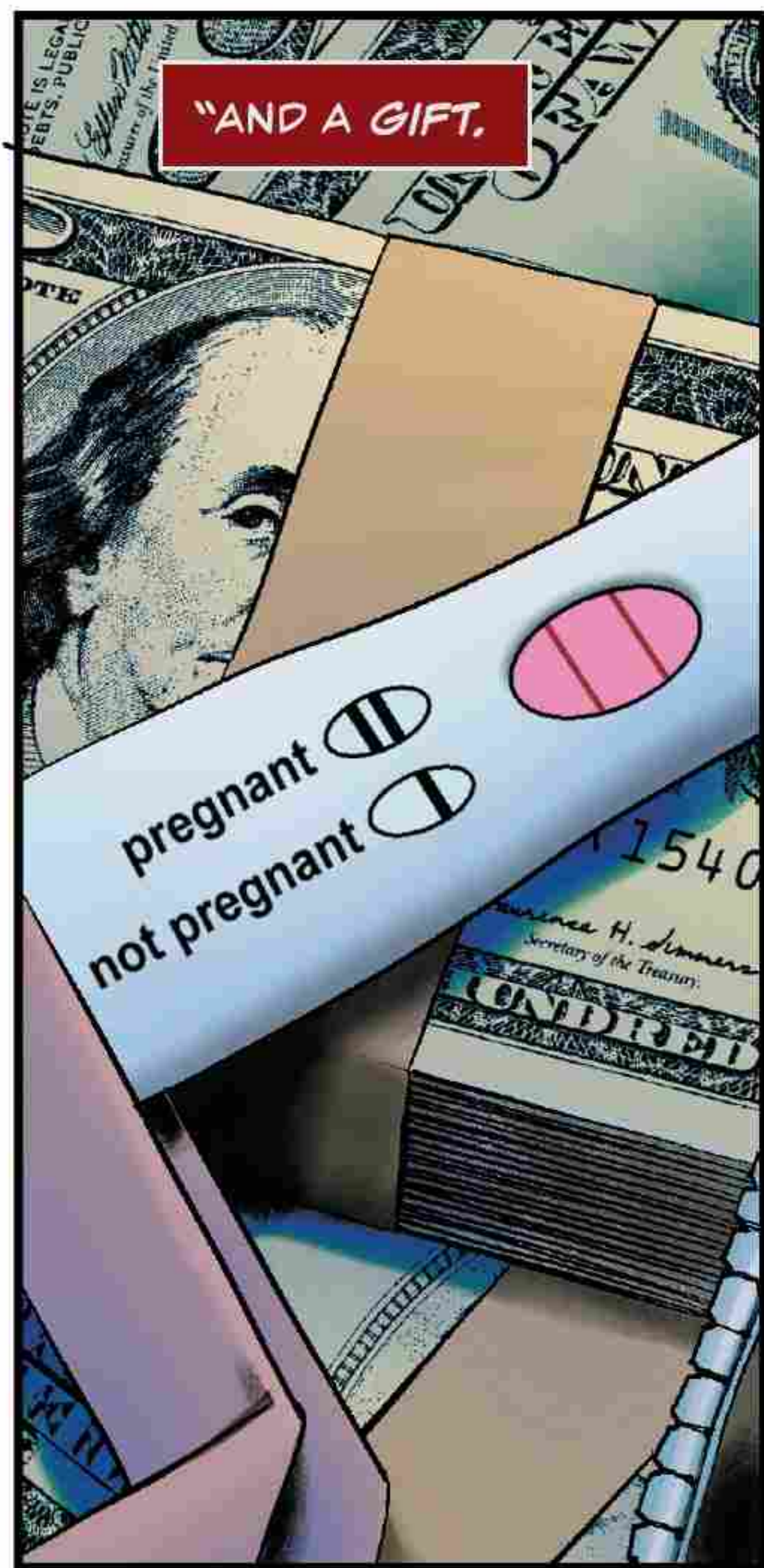




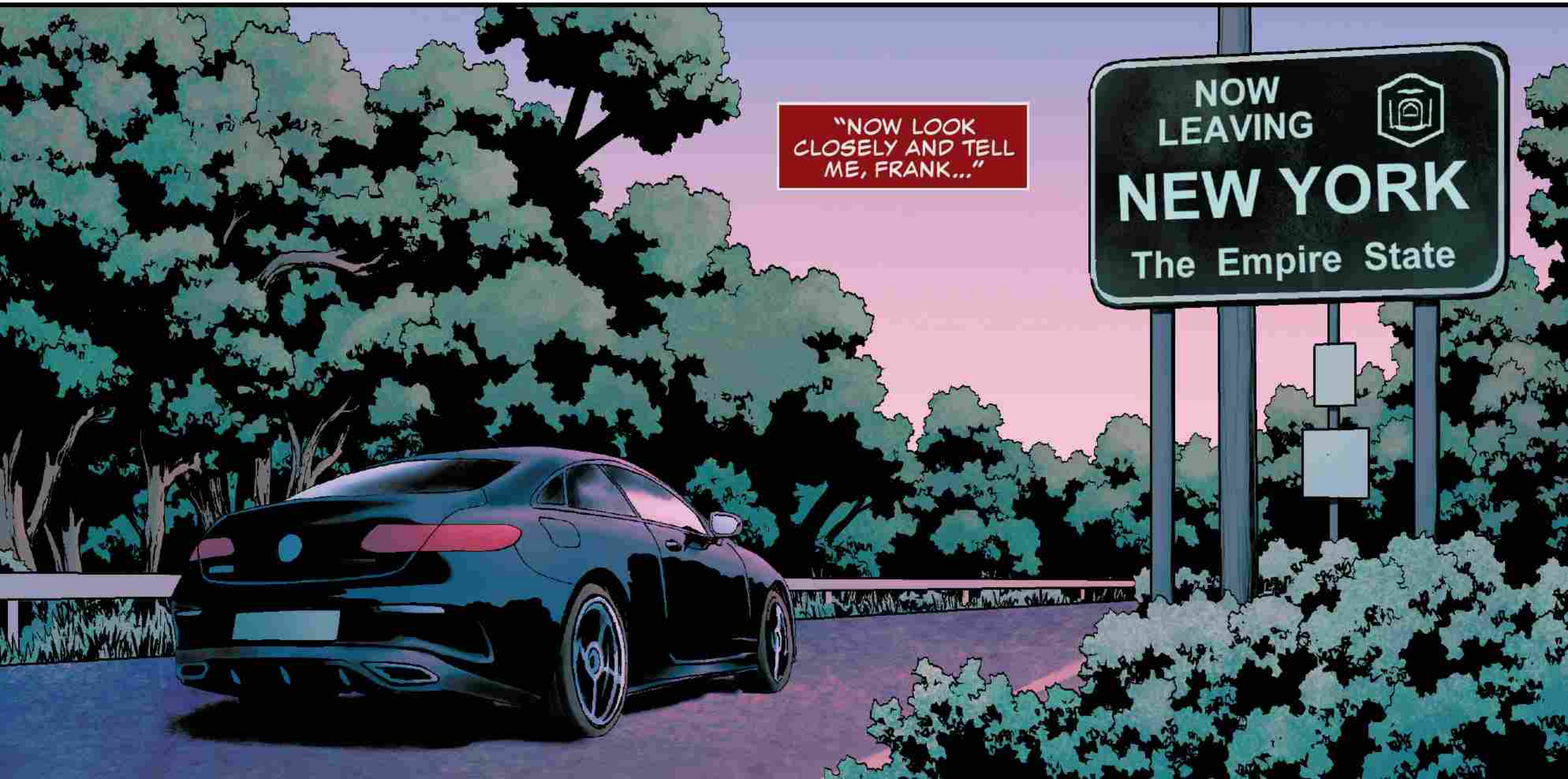
"WE COME
WITH AN
OFFER."



"THE CHANCE
TO FULFILL YOUR
TRUE DESTINY."

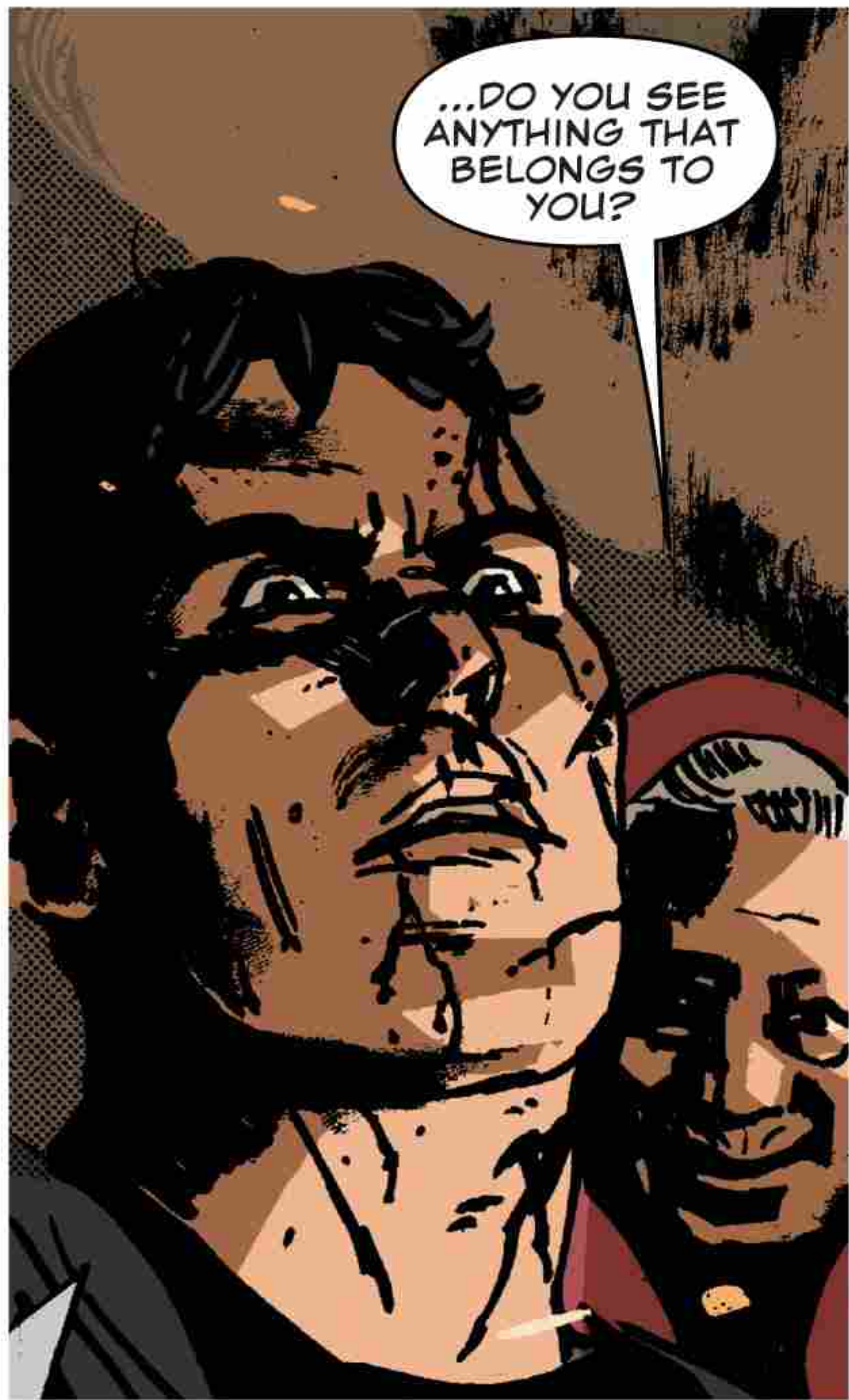


"AND A GIFT."



"NOW LOOK
CLOSELY AND TELL
ME, FRANK..."

NOW
LEAVING
NEW YORK
The Empire State



...DO YOU SEE ANYTHING THAT BELONGS TO YOU?



MARIA...

FRANK?

FRANK, IS THAT YOU? WHERE ARE WE, FRANK? I DON'T... I CAN'T REMEMBER...



THAT'S NOT MY WIFE. MY WIFE IS DEAD.



I WOKE UP SURROUNDED BY ALL THESE STRANGE PEOPLE, AND I...I COULDN'T REMEMBER WHERE I'D BEEN OR EVEN...WHO I WAS.

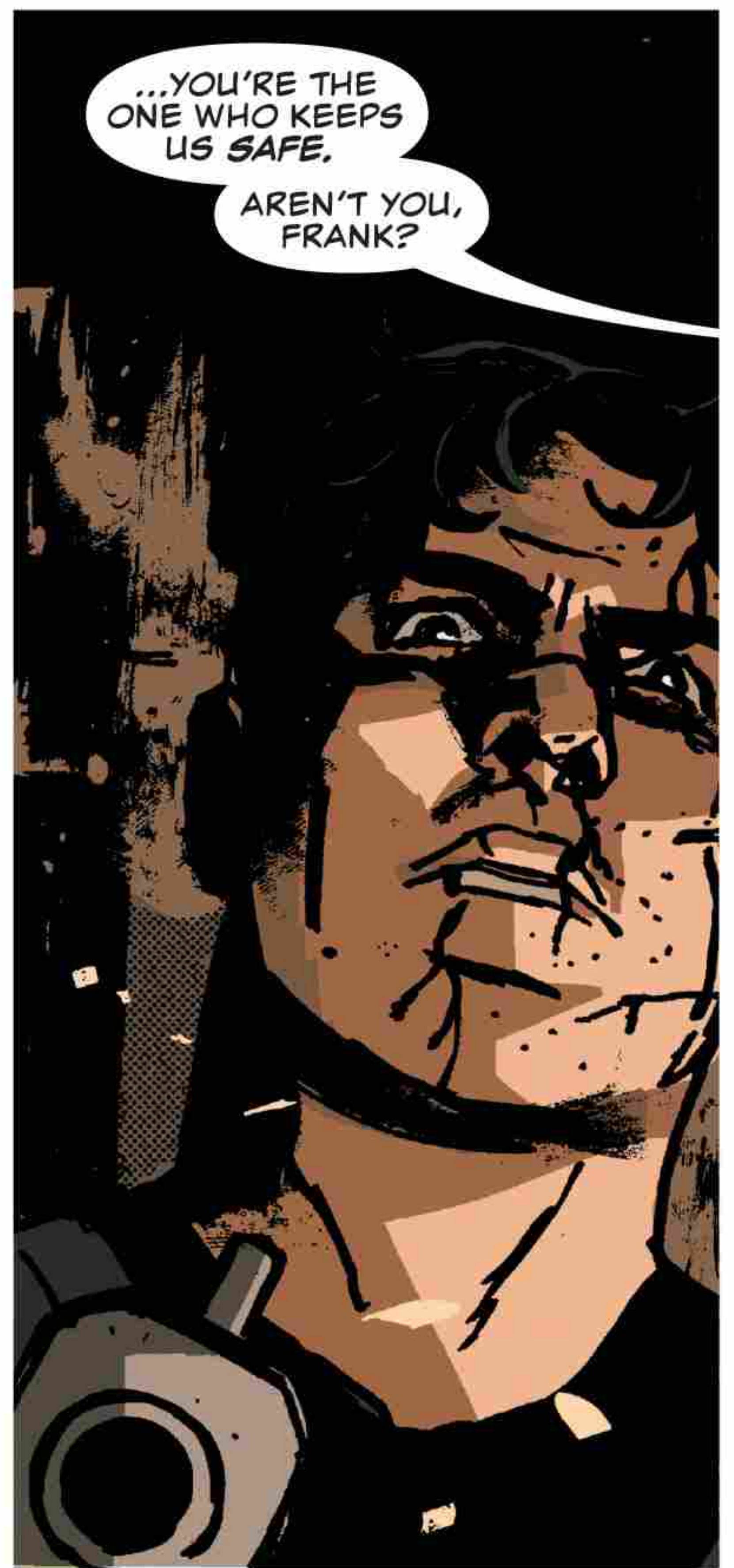
BUT... SEEING YOU NOW...I REMEMBER, FRANK.

TELL IT TO STOP TALKING!



I REMEMBER OUR HOME AND THE TENT OUT BACK AND THAT VAN YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON.

AND...OUR KIDS, FRANK. OUR BEAUTIFUL KIDS. AND I REMEMBER YOU, YOU'RE...



...YOU'RE THE ONE WHO KEEPS US *SAFE*.

AREN'T YOU, FRANK?



WHAT FOLLOWS IS A STATEMENT OF FACT:

THE EARTH ORBITS THE SUN.

THE HUMAN HEART PUMPS BLOOD THROUGH THE BODY.

FRANK CASTLE IS A STARKLY SIMPLE MAN.

FRANK CASTLE IS A PROFOUNDLY COMPLICATED MAN.

THE COMIC BOOK SERIES YOU'VE JUST READ HAS BEEN EXQUISITELY DRAWN. THIS IS DUE TO THE HARD WORK OF AN ACCOMPLISHED TEAM OF ARTISTS, CONSISTING OF JESÚS SAIZ AND PAUL AZACETA, ALONG WITH COLORISTS DAVE STEWART AND MATT HOLLINGSWORTH.

I, AS THE WRITER, AM DEEPLY PROUD OF HOW SAID SERIES HAS COME TOGETHER ACROSS THE COURSE OF ITS PUBLICATION. I WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO CALL IT ONE OF THE PROUDEST MOMENTS OF MY TWENTY-YEAR COMIC-BOOK WRITING CAREER.

THIS IS A STORY I'VE WANTED TO TELL FOR MANY YEARS, AND I AM GRATEFUL TO ALL INVOLVED AT MARVEL COMICS FOR MAKING IT HAPPEN.

I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL TO ALL OF YOU WHO'VE READ AND SUPPORTED THE SERIES.

MANY NINJA WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF THIS COMIC.

THIS HAS BEEN THE STORY OF A WAR.

THIS HAS BEEN THE STORY OF THE DISSOLUTION OF A FAMILY.

SINCE THE CHARACTER'S FIRST APPEARANCE IN 1973, THE IDEAS AND SYMBOLS OF THE PUNISHER HAVE COME TO MEAN MANY THINGS TO MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLE.

SOME OF THOSE I AGREE WITH. SOME I VERY MUCH DON'T.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, DESPITE THE COMPLICATED NATURE OF THE CHARACTER, DESPITE THE CHANGING TIMES AND DISPARATE VIEWPOINTS, THE STORY OF FRANK CASTLE IS FUNDAMENTALLY ONE VERY SIMPLE THING:

A TRAGEDY.

DICTIONARY.COM DEFINES "TRAGEDY" AS:

"A LAMENTABLE, DREADFUL OR FATAL EVENT OR AFFAIR; CALAMITY; DISASTER."

"A DRAMATIC COMPOSITION, OFTEN IN VERSE, DEALING WITH A SERIOUS OR SOMBER THEME, TYPICALLY INVOLVING A GREAT PERSON DESTINED TO EXPERIENCE DOWNFALL OR UTTER DESTRUCTION, AS THROUGH A CHARACTER FLAW OR CONFLICT WITH SOME OVERPOWERING FORCE, AS FATE OR AN UNYIELDING SOCIETY."

THUS CONCLUDES OUR STORY OF THE PUNISHER, THE KING OF KILLERS.

THE LONG, BLOODY TRAGEDY OF THE PUNISHER WILL NEVER BE FINISHED.

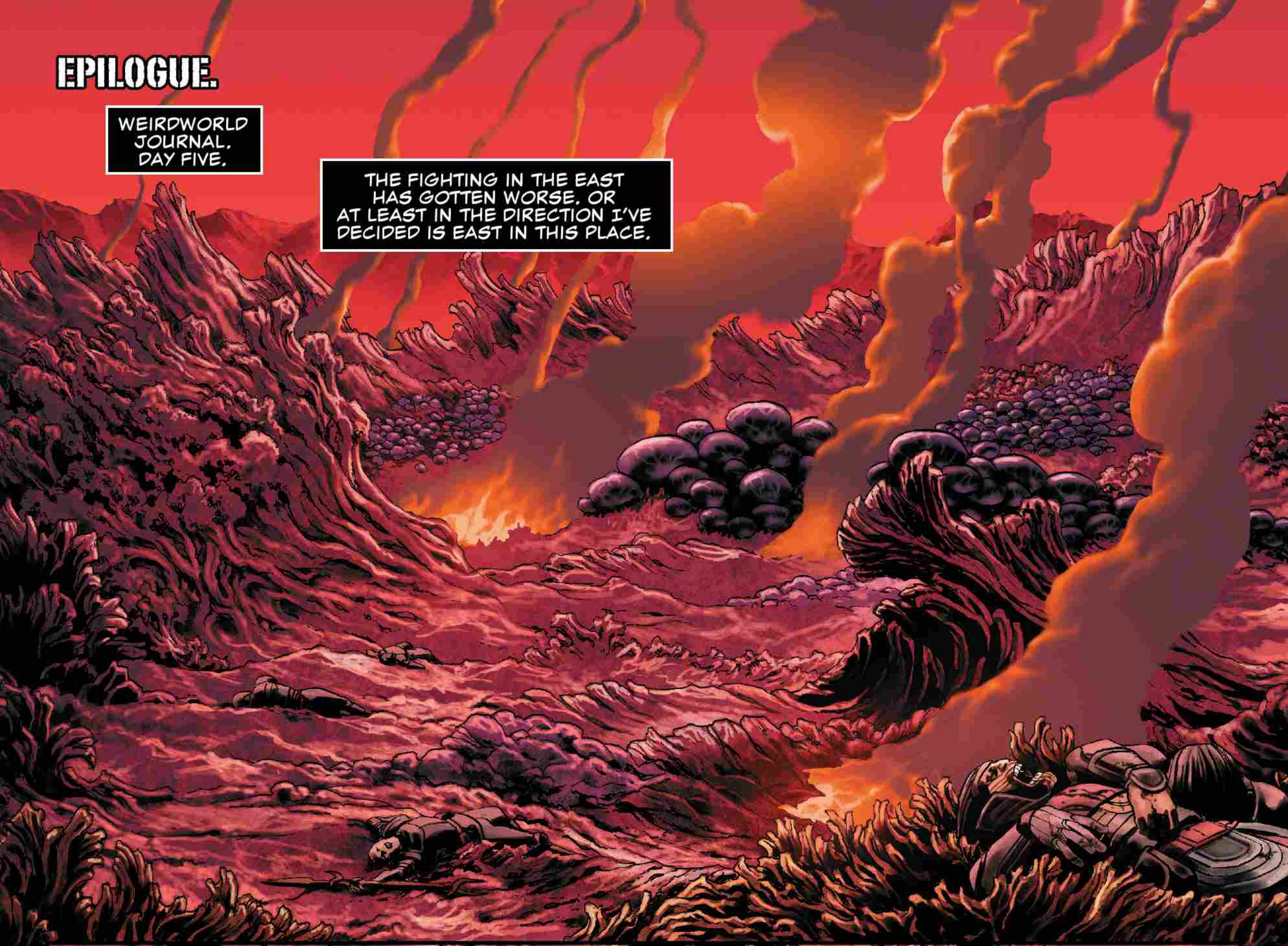
GOD BLESS THE BEAST.

**JASON AARON
KC, APRIL 10, 2023**

EPILOGUE.

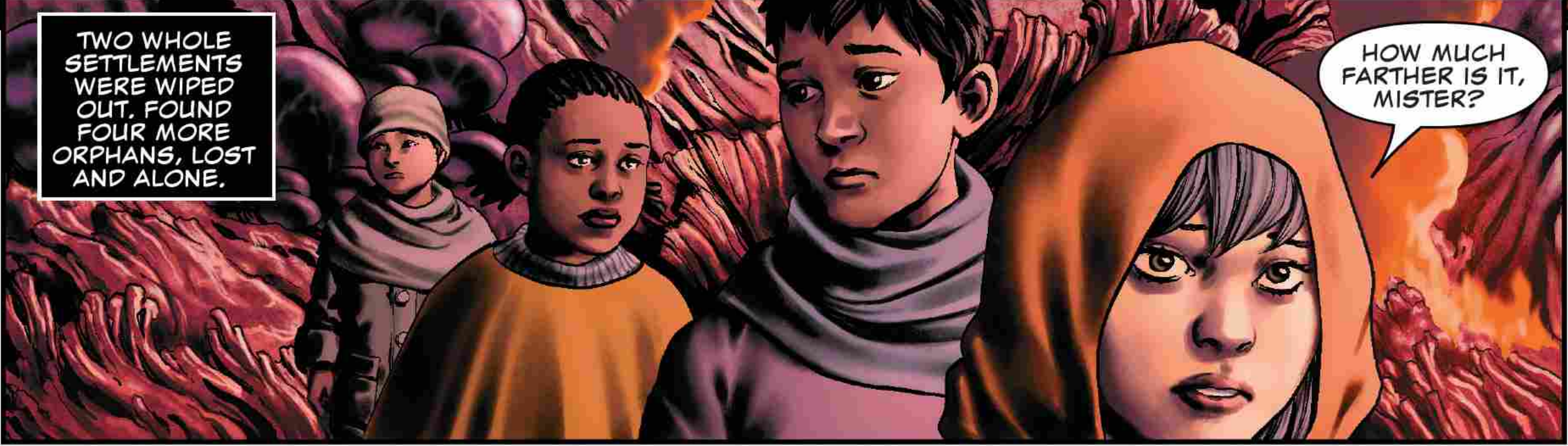
WEIRDWORLD
JOURNAL.
DAY FIVE.

THE FIGHTING IN THE EAST
HAS GOTTEN WORSE. OR
AT LEAST IN THE DIRECTION I'VE
DECIDED IS EAST IN THIS PLACE.



TWO WHOLE
SETTLEMENTS
WERE WIPED
OUT. FOUND
FOUR MORE
ORPHANS, LOST
AND ALONE.

HOW MUCH
FARTHER IS IT,
MISTER?



SCREAMS IN THE DARK
EVERY NIGHT. WARRIORS
ON THE PATHS, CALLING
FOR RECRUITS.
TO FIGHT THE WAR.

NOT MUCH
FARTHER. ONLY
JUST STARTED
BUILDING THE
SHELTER.

IS IT...
IS IT
SAFE?



YES.

ARE YOU
SURE? HOW
DO YOU KNOW?
WHO ARE
YOU?

SO I STAY CLEAR
OF THE PATHS. I
MAKE MY OWN.



BECAUSE
IT'S NOT
MY WAR.

NOT
ANYMORE.

FRANK.

CALL ME
FRANK.





ZOMBIE